

# New Theatre



**Hollywood  
Hails "Bury  
The Dead"**

**"The Movie  
Trade Paper  
Racket" by  
S. F. Van  
Buren**

**Norma Chambers and  
Robert Thomsen —  
New York production  
of "Bury the Dead."**

**May 1936  
15 cents**



# NEW THEATRE

MAY, 1936

## The New Theatres Meet

311 North 16th Street, Philadelphia. Once this old building was a church. The Christian Temperance League made its headquarters here. Nowadays, audiences not content to wait for "pie in the sky," see their own lives dramatized in the plays of writers like Albert Maltz, Clifford Odets and Philip Stevenson. Here, and here alone in this great city of two million, they can see plays like *Black Pit*, *God's In His Heaven*, *Private Hicks* and *Till the Day I Die*. Here, too, are shown the great social films of Pabst, Lang, Clair, Pudovkin, Dovjenco and Eisenstein. The audiences are living proof that Hollywood has not supplied the final answer to what the people really want.

This is the home of the New Theatre of Philadelphia, a struggling, growing, young labor theatre that is typical of the New Theatre League groups represented at this third bi-annual conference of the new theatre movement. (A glance at the theatre's wall-newspaper gives an insight into the life of this group—alongside of a critical review of the latest issue of *NEW THEATRE* and a funny little poem about latecomers at rehearsals is an editorial clipped from a liberal newspaper criticising the reactionary Tydings-McCormack bill and another clipping about the banning of *It Can't Happen Here*.)

Delegates have come to this conference from theatres all over the United States and from Canada. Here are theatre people, representatives of all phases of this collective art. One of the founders of the Provincetown Theatre is here. She can tell you why this theatre movement is not a flash in the pan, destined for the same end as the abortive art theatre movement. She can tell you of changing circumstances in American life and the American theatre that make it possible for an Odets or a Shaw to rise from obscurity to national prominence on the basis of a single one act play that strikes at the heart of the problems facing its audiences.

How to go about presenting

throughout America the best possible productions of the most significant plays of our time—how to reach the widest possible audiences with plays like *Bury the Dead*, *Waiting for Lefty*, *Awake and Sing*, *Stevedore*, *Hymn to the Rising Sun*, *Paradise Lost* and *Let Freedom Ring*—that, briefly, is the main purpose of this conference.

All of us listen eagerly as the delegates take up problem after problem—repertory, theatre management, direction, criticism, technical work, audience organization, the new theatre school, etc. We exchange experiences and opinions based on the work of theatres as far apart as Los Angeles and New York, Washington, D. C., and Toronto, Detroit and Buffalo, Baltimore and Youngstown—and we find our problems are essentially the same.

After many hours of discussion, one thing becomes clear. We are not a subsidized theatre. We do not have enough directors and organizers to supply the demand of theatre groups all over the country. Because of lack of money, we must use our present forces in the most practical way; we must concentrate on key cities where it will be possible to maintain community and labor theatres which can, in addition to producing plays, serve as centers for the showing of films, dance and music recitals, art exhibitions and, ultimately, community recreational activities. With its new plan for the establishment of such theatres the new theatre movement has set itself a goal with important and wide-reaching implications. Its attainment will be of tremendous importance to the progressive movement in the theatre arts and to the fight against reaction. The responsibility for our future rests not only with the actors, directors, playwrights and authors of the new theatre movement, but with its audiences. The building of the new theatre movement is no easy task: for those who want to help, the address of the New Theatre League is 55 West 45th Street, New York City.

HERBERT KLINE

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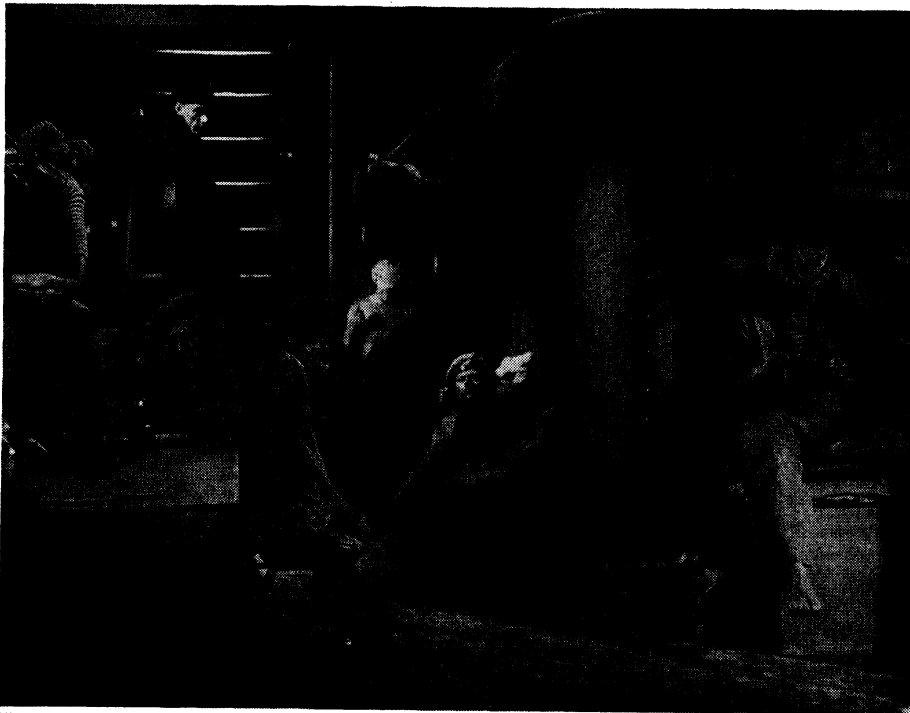
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"WE ARE FROM KRONSTADT," NEW SOVIET FILM NOW SHOWING IN NEW YORK.

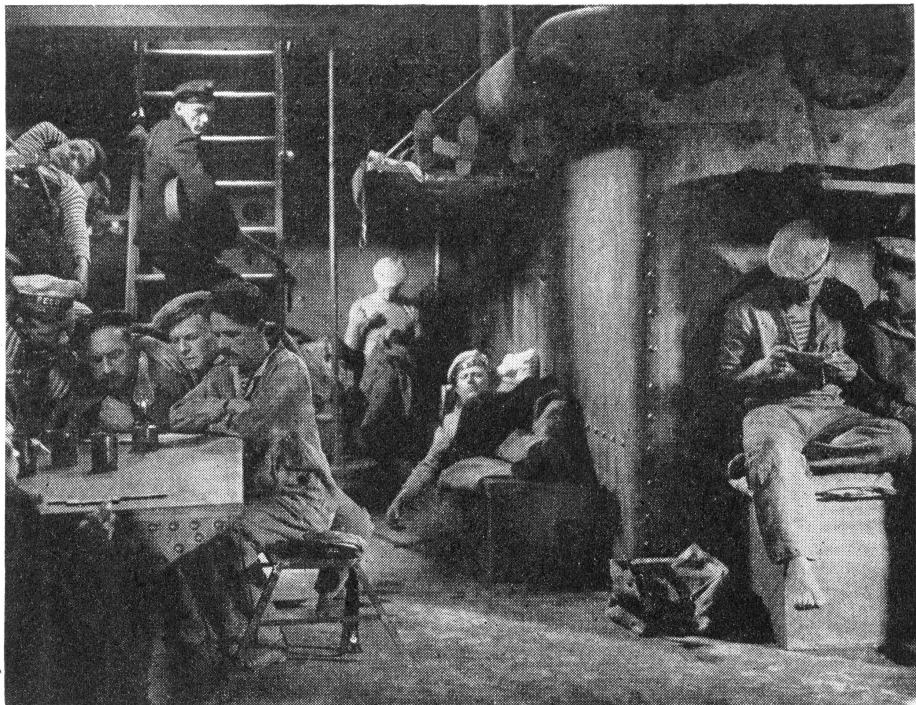
On Saturday evening April 19th, Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* opened on Broadway for a New York run, and was unanimously acclaimed by the critics and the audience as the finest anti-war play of our time. Congratulations and strong audience support are due both the Actors Repertory Company which presented the play under the management of Alex Yokel and the Contemporary Theatre, which will follow up the public reading of *Bury the Dead* described elsewhere in this issue with a Hollywood production. But, in the general scramble to give *Bury the Dead* its due critical acclaim, let us not forget how young Shaw's play was given its first hearing. When Irwin Shaw walked into the New Theatre office two months ago with a script called *Bury the Dead*, he was but one of two hundred unknown writers who had been encouraged to enter a one-act, anti-war play in a play contest initiated by the New Theatre League and the American League Against War and Fascism. Shaw didn't finish his play in time to enter it in the contest, but the same effort that was put into presenting *Waiting For Lefty* and *Private Hicks*, two previous prize play contest winners, was accorded *Bury the Dead*. The play was first presented on a "New Theatre Night" at the 46th Street Theatre by the same cast that is now presenting it on Broadway. Like *Waiting For Lefty* and *Private Hicks*, the play reached thousands of readers immediately through publication in NEW THEATRE. Like another unknown writer, Clifford Odets, Irwin Shaw achieved national recognition overnight with a single one act play. NEW THEATRE, the New Theatre League and

the young players of the Actors Repertory Company have reason to be proud of their work in giving Irwin Shaw's unforgettable anti-war play the immediate hearing it deserved.

Writing of John Howard Lawson's *Theory and Technique of Playwriting*, John Mason Brown, in a review which gave some credit to the scholarliness of its author, came to the conclusion that "It won't do any harm and it may do some good." So far most of Mr. Brown's critical brethren have failed to give Mr. Lawson's book even this much consideration, though a number of critics have found such books as Mr. John Middleton Murry's new work on Shakespeare worth serious attention. Since Mr. Murry's book contains such startling and original observations as "Shakespeare is like life itself, he *is* life itself" and Prospero "is the quintessence," we hope our readers will forgive us for delaying our treatment of this book while devoting feature articles to *Theory and Technique of Playwriting* and *Moscow Rehearsals*. In the past, NEW THEATRE, like the critics, has sometimes neglected significant books on the theatre, forgetting that such books may deserve more consideration than a play opening. We believe that Charmion von Wiegand's article on Mr. Lawson's book and Lee Strasberg's article on Mr. Houghton's book indicate a more serious attitude towards books on the theatre on our part. And we hope that the reviewers will give Mr. Lawson's new work the serious criticism, favorable or unfavorable, that it deserves.

With four hits now running in New York City and with theatres scoring hits in other cities throughout the country, the Federal Theatre WPA Project faces elimination from the national theatre scene just as it is proving a great stimulus to the American theatre. The project was originally planned to give unemployed theatre people work in their own profession. With productions like *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Triple-A Plowed Under*, *Chalk Dust*, *Macbeth* and *Censored* to its credit, the WPA may be killed overnight by politicians who see the arts projects (which are being attacked as "boondoggling" by Republicans) as an issue on which the Republicans will steal Democratic votes. The plan is to shove the projects back onto the states (the same relief program advanced by the Liberty Leaguers), and then let them die out if the states cannot provide enough funds for their maintenance. The red-baiting campaign of the reactionary papers has already reached the floor of the Senate. Since the fascist-minded gentry of the right are so eager to kill the arts projects, every progressive organization and every person who believes in the right of the unemployed for work relief and who loves good theatre should wire or write immediately to his representative demanding that the Federal Theatre Project and other arts projects be continued.

The conflict between producers and screen workers for control of those aspects of film making that rightfully belong to the latter is assuming major proportions in Hollywood. A few weeks ago William K. Howard walked off the lot in protest against producer Arthur K. Hornblow's interference with *The Princess Comes to Town*, which Howard was directing for Paramount. Howard threatened to quit and Paramount gave in. Thereafter Hornblow was able to get on the lot only by the courtesy of a guest pass. On April 20th, four screen writers, Martin Mooney, William Wister Haines, Richard Macaulay, and Robert Andrews were fired by Warners for signing a petition protesting the studio's action in not inviting Sheridan Gibney, screen writer of *Anthony Adverse* to the picture's first preview. The jobs of sixteen other writers who signed the petition are also endangered. With the Screen Guilds behind them, the writers, like Howard, expect to win their case.



"WE ARE FROM KRONSTADT," NEW SOVIET FILM NOW SHOWING IN NEW YORK

# The Equity Elections

BY RICHARD PACK

Long before their journalistic brethren had abandoned Bohemian individualism and organized into the American Newspaper Guild, actors were picketing, forming flying squadrons and in general carrying on activity of the sort usually associated with longshoremen, miners, and mill hands. Those were the amazing days of 1919, when Ed Wynn, Eddie Cantor, James Barton, the Barrymores, Eddie Dowling, and the late Marie Dressler were strikers and George M. Cohan a strike-breaker. At one time the managers had been able to meet the demands of the actor with a few pretty words, the object of which was to convince the actor that he was far above ordinary toiling mortals, a genius, and consequently not to be concerned with such worldly matters as collective bargaining, hours of work, and wages. The 1919 strike put an end to this fiction. With the aid of the stagehands and musicians, Actors' Equity won a decisive victory in the struggle with the managers and a significant chapter was added to American Labor history. The actors had blazed the way for unionization of other professional artists and "white-collar" workers.

Today this pioneer—Actors' Equity—faces what is probably the most important event in its history since the strike: the May 25th election to Equity Council. It is this council of members, 10 of whom are elected every two years, which is nominally the directing power of Equity, responsible only to the membership. Upon the outcome of the elections to Council, largely hinges the future of Equity. Vitality affected are not only the screen and stage members of Equity but many actors in radio and the Federal Theatre who are unorganized. To understand the importance of these elections, it is necessary to know something of what has happened in Equity during the past few years.

Until the depression, when his hard lot became even harder, the average Equity member paid little attention to how his organization was being run, what it was doing, or should have been doing for him. Gradually the realization came that Equity was not functioning as efficiently as it might; that instead of being a vigorous, democratically-controlled union, alert to every need of its members, Equity was tending to become a static body, its policies left to Frank Gillmore and the small coterie under him. The spirit that won in 1919 was gone.

The *Sailor Beware* incident in 1934 brought matters to a head. A smash hit, the show had made big money for months. When the box office receipts began to fall off a little, the manager attempted to slash the wages of the cast, although the show was still making a good profit. The actors resisted. The three members of the cast who had been most active in fighting the cut were fired. They took their case to Equity officials; the word they received was: "Sorry . . . we can't do anything about it." Only when the entire *Sailor Beware* company threatened to walk out, were they taken back.

Since the *Sailor Beware* incident occurred just before a Council election, a spontaneous movement arose to elect Council members who would, in the words of Philip Loeb, "fight for the actor and serve the interests of the members at all times." Feeling was sufficiently strong to achieve the election of several such representatives. It was further crystallized and strengthened by the organization of an informal group, "to provide an opportunity for Equity members to discuss and formulate plans for the strengthening of their organization." Various labels by its opponents as "insurgent," "left wing," and "the younger element," the group finally adopted the name Actors' Forum in self-defense.

The Forum advocated such constructive measures as more frequent meetings of the Equity membership; a Cuts Board, to give the actor genuine protection against unfair wage cuts; abolition of the \$25 Junior minimum salary; rehearsal expense allowance; Equity extras on Equity stages. That the Forum definitely reflected the needs of the actors was soon demonstrated; within a year the number of membership meetings had been increased from one to four, a Cuts Board had been established, and rehearsal expenses won from the managers. On the question of Junior minimums a compromise was effected which provided that a manager can only employ twenty per cent of his cast at the Junior salary.

However, Mr. Gillmore seems to feel just as much for the manager as for the actor. Mr. Gillmore wailed: "Under the persistent prodding of the Forum (sic!) we have been stampeded into an orgy of new rules which make it difficult for the managers to produce, which have increased the cost of production. . . . Man-

agers are really necessary to us, and being so, is it not better to try and cooperate with them? . . ."

The Gillmore supporters made the air over Times Square thick with abuse of the Forum. It was a "menace," a "dual union" and what not. At the quarterly meeting last November over two thousand Equity members jammed the grand ballroom of the Hotel Astor to hear what had been billed by word-of-mouth as the "show-down between Gillmore and the Forum." The Gillmore who in the strike of 1919 was called a "radical agitator" himself now raised the Red scare! He threatened to resign, unless the membership supported him "against the Forum." More than once a Forum representative took the floor to declare that the Forum had never raised the question of Gillmore's resignation; that this was merely an issue conjured up by Gillmore himself and had no bearing on the case. Gillmore had his way; he won a "vote of confidence"—349-138.

During this meeting, Forum representatives announced that the Forum would dissolve if Council would provide monthly membership meetings for the democratic discussion of Equity problems. The next day Council voted to hold informal monthly meetings. Since there was no further reason for its existence, the Forum disbanded. But the problem of building a really democratic and efficient Equity is not yet solved. There are many things which an active independent Council could do, yet the progressive members still constitute only a small minority. By tradition, membership has become a kind of honorary post, and power has been largely handed over to Gillmore.

Consequently Equity takes no stand on many pressing issues. Organization is urgently needed in radio, particularly on the West Coast. There are far too many actors in the Federal Theatre who are not yet members of Equity. Gillmore would have them dismissed from the project instead of bringing them into Equity. There is the need for closer cooperation with the stage hands' and musicians' unions and with such organizations as the Screen Actors' Guild and the Dramatists' Guild. In the current battle between the Dramatists' Guild and the managers, Gillmore has overlooked the fundamental issues of the conflict, and in leaning towards the side of the managers has alienated the Dramatists' Guild, with which he should have aligned himself. There is the need for economy. Thousands of dollars could be saved each year by an efficiently run organization.

As for efficiency: A responsible Council  
(Continued on page 37)

# "Bury the Dead" : A Hollywood Preview

(On March 29th a public reading of Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* was held at the Hollywood Women's Club before twelve hundred members of the film colony for the purpose of stimulating interest in the Los Angeles Contemporary Theatre's forthcoming production of the play. Fredric March, his wife Florence Eldridge, and John Cromwell read the play; Donald Ogden Stewart, author of *A Parody Outline of History, Mr. and Mrs. Haddock Abroad, Rebound*, and other books and plays, and an outstanding screen writer, acted as chairman.

The following is a stenographic transcript of the chairman's opening speech and the discussion following the reading. Because of space limitations, it has been necessary to omit passages in one or two of the speeches.)

MR. STEWART: It's awfully good to be back again at the Hollywood Women's Club. (Laughter.) I don't know whether many of you remember it, but I delivered a lecture here twelve years ago. I imagine that most of the people who attended that lecture are now dead. (Laughter.) They were certainly dying very rapidly. As a matter of fact, I don't suppose many of you ever lectured to women's clubs the way I did that year. That was the year I began to lose my hair. The subject of my lecture that afternoon was "The Younger Generation and Life." (Laughter.) I was representing both. (Laughter.) And I had quite a message which, as a matter of fact, wasn't a very bad message. It concerned the younger generation's literary ideals and aspirations and what they intended to do.

As I remember it, we were very, very bitter; we were very, very disillusioned; and we were above all determined to tell the truth about life. That was twelve years ago. I don't know whether or not you have seen my two latest contributions to the screen. One was a vehicle for Marion Davies called *Going Hollywood*, and the other was Miss Crawford's *No More Ladies*. (Laughter.)

That wasn't exactly what I meant twelve years ago. It isn't so funny as that. I don't feel very proud of myself. I want to tell a story about my young son, which has some bearing on this. He is seven years old. The other day he went to see *The Informer* and he was crazy about it, especially Gyppo. I said, "Didn't you think it was awful what Gyppo did?" He said, "What did he do, Daddy?" I said, "Well, he betrayed his best friend."

He said, "What is 'betrayed'?" "Well, supposing I were hiding somewhere and if they found out where I was they would kill me, and they came to you and said, "Here's a dollar, where's your father?" And you told them—that would be betraying me." He said, "Well, Daddy, a dollar wouldn't be enough."

That is a little the way I feel twelve years after the ideals of the younger generation. . . .

And I am not really blaming the movies for my downfall. Nobody came to me with a revolver at my head and said, "You've got to go out and take this big salary and have three automobiles and live in that goddam sunshine." (Laughter and applause.) It's my fault and I simply want to say a few things about my present situation and particularly why I am here tonight.

I am here simply and directly because the movies aren't good enough. And three cars aren't good enough. And this Hollywood happiness isn't good enough in the face of the misery there is in the world today. (Applause.) And you know what Hollywood's or the movie's answer to that is? Entertainment! That's what they want to give you. That's the first thing you learn when you go to work in a studio—pictures are made for entertainment. That's a lot like a man who is starving to death and you say, "Maybe if we make funny faces he won't notice it". We are making funny faces while people are starving to death.

The whole ideal of moving pictures that you get when you get out here is that people go in to forget—they come into a theatre to lose themselves in some kind of nirvana that happens to them when Clark Gable comes on the screen. They are there to get away from life. Ten million men are out of work, but the movies say nothing about that. Five colored boys are going to be sent to the electric chair in Alabama, but the movies are concerned with whether Dick Powell gets the girl.

Now I say that isn't good enough. And I say that I am here in behalf of the Contemporary Theatre and the New Theatre League in New York which is the parent of this theatre, and NEW THEATRE, which is the official magazine of all the new theatre groups. I am here because they offer something better than Hollywood. They don't want you to go into a theatre to get away from life. They don't want you to go there and forget your troubles. They don't put on these plays so that the rich can see the misery

in the world and feel sorry for it. Help is not going to come from the top down.

I am for the new theatre movement and the Contemporary Theatre because they have a social service plan at the back of their minds and that is a plan for the workers and the poor people themselves to come to the theatre to see how it's done and can be done; it isn't to have them forget their troubles, but to have them realize there is a way out of their troubles that they can take part in themselves. It is not charity they want—it is hope—and the new theatre can give them hope. I think that even with the small productions—that one flash of hope and truth against a plain white canvas wall, is more important than all the entertainment that Hollywood and its million and two-million dollar productions can ever give. (Applause.)

And so, tonight we come to welcome another younger generation. This is a man named Irwin Shaw. He has written a play called *Bury the Dead*. When Herb Klein of NEW THEATRE brought this play into my office and I read it, I had an immediate feeling that everybody ought to hear this play. There were enough people who agreed with me, and agreed to help out on this program tonight, and chief among those are the three people who are going to read this play tonight. I don't think that Fredric March needs an introduction; his wife, Florence Eldridge, is one of the great actresses of the American stage, and has recently been given the rôle of Queen Elizabeth in *Mary of Scotland*. The director, one of the great directors of Hollywood—John Cromwell. We owe these people a great deal for coming here tonight and I am very proud to introduce them.



IRWIN SHAW

Valente

*Bury the Dead* was then read by John Cromwell, Fredric March and Florence Eldridge.

The conclusion of the play reading was greeted with tremendous and prolonged applause.

MR. STEWART: May I take it from your applause that you feel as I do that this play must go on? (Much applause.) I think one of the marks of a good chairman is when he knows that there is nothing more that he can himself say, except "Thank God that that play has been written; thank God for Irwin Shaw, Fredric March, Florence Eldridge, John Cromwell". (Applause.)

Mr. Stewart read a telegram from Lewis Milestone, director of *All Quiet on the Western Front*:

"A play like *Bury the Dead* is one of the most important manifestations of life in our American theatre today. When the burning issue of the day becomes the theme of a talented writer, it results in a powerful and important play. Let there be more of these plays for the sake of future civilization."

Also a telegram from Morris Ankrum, director of the Pasadena Playhouse:

"Regret out-of-town rehearsal makes attendance impossible. I wish I could tell you personally what an exciting and truly fine play Contemporary has. Its production is a necessity. The play says something needful and says it in terms of brilliant theatre for a modern theatre unafraid of its obligations. Great success."

I am going to call on a few professionals to give us a few words each on their reaction to this play, in order that they can be of help to the Contemporary Theatre in its production. I regret that illness necessitates that Basil Rathbone and Jimmy Cagney cannot speak. We have six other men, of whom the first is Onslow Stevens, one of the leading men in *Three Musketeers*, and a product of Pasadena Community Playhouse.

ONSLow STEVENS: I don't think there is anything more to say. We all felt it was a great play. I think it is a truly great play and I will take any part in it that the Contemporary Theatre will offer me.

Mr. Stewart called on Arthur Kober, well-known writer, contributor to the *New Yorker* and author of *Thunder Over the Bronx*.

ARTHUR KOBER: I think the play says infinitely more than anything I can say about it. I understand that Mr. Shaw is here tonight. If he is, I want to welcome him to Hollywood. He is here to work as a screen writer for RKO and as you all know, the screen writer is an important, oh, so important individual in this town.

For a long time the screen writers have



THE ACTOR'S REPERTORY COMPANY IN "BURY THE DEAD"

Willard Van Dyke

been trying to organize a guild. At the present moment there is trouble within that guild. A group of writers are greatly upset over statements made by John Howard Lawson. It seems that Mr. Lawson, because he had lots of time and leisure, went to Washington to speak in behalf of the writer. It never occurred to this group that Mr. Lawson went there perhaps at his own expense, or perhaps gave up some work of his own in order to represent them in the fight against the horrible Duffy Copyright Bill, a bill so horrible and so inimical to . . . (almost sputtered) I am so indignant, I—I can't go on.

There were hurried telephone calls made by the leaders of this faction, and a telegram was then sent to Washington objecting to Mr. Lawson's statement that the screen writer was being treated as an office boy. Mr. Lawson made a two hours' speech in Washington, and the press saw fit to quote only about two minutes of it, and even misquoted that. My esteemed brothers felt that the screen writer had been disparaged. He was not an office boy. And so they sent a telegram denouncing Mr. Lawson. They affixed their signatures together with the names of two of their screen plays. I see several of the writers here tonight. I hope they are very proud of their screen plays. I hope that after listening to this

play tonight, they are very proud of their screen plays. (Applause.)

I want to welcome Mr. Shaw to Hollywood, where we have a free press. (Laughter.) A certain newspaper which prints a screen directory, won't permit the use of advertisements of a certain picture. It will only say "A Certain Picture." Do I make myself clear? To hell with it! I'll mention the certain newspaper—I mean The Examiner, which refuses the advertisements of Mae West's *Klondike Annie* because Mr. Hearst has denounced it editorially.

I have just finished a Ruggles and Boland picture for Harlan Thompson, the producer, who is in the audience. Perhaps Mr. Hearst will denounce *Early to Bed*, Harlan, and thus assure us of an immediate success.

Mr. Shaw, welcome to Hollywood, where Mr. Hearst, in an editorial, has just decreed April 6th as Army Day. I don't know what the procedure is—we're probably expected to entertain some military person. I'm going to single out an officer and send him a box of flowers—you know, as you do on Mother's Day.

Mr. Shaw, welcome to Hollywood, out of which has come Mr. Russell, the author of the Russell-Kramer bill (hisses), a bill which would make public meetings of this sort illegal. We cannot have this bill. Another bill, the Tydings-McCor-





THE ACTOR'S REPERTORY COMPANY IN "BURY THE DEAD"

*Willard Van Dyke*

mick bill, now before Congress, would make any talk against militarism an offense. We cannot have this sort of thing.

Welcome to Hollywood, Mr. Shaw, where we are going to have the ROTC again, which means compulsory military training. Welcome to Hollywood, where the Hearst papers are campaigning for a West Point of the West. It seems we are in danger of military aggression. Those little Japanese gardeners you see around town—in their leggings—they're in disguise; when they dig into the ground planting seeds, they are really planting mines. Their ancient Fords can at a moment's notice be made into tanks. (Laughter.)

Mr. Shaw, welcome to Hollywood. I have written fifteen screen plays, God help me. I'd exchange every goddam one of them for this play tonight. (Much applause.)

The chairman called for Mr. Shaw if he were in the house, but he had not yet arrived in Hollywood. The chairman then called on Lionel Stander, actor.

LIONEL STANDER: In addition to being a play of high artistic calibre, I think *Bury the Dead* is of peculiar significance to those of us who are against war but who are puzzled as to just what we as individuals can do about it. I know myself that I am often filled with a sense of personal helplessness when I pick up the papers and read about the situation in Japan, Germany or Italy, or see a movie which depicts the glories of dying for God and country—and the Du Ponts. (Applause.) I say to myself, "I am against war—I know it's insane—but what can I do about it?" There is something we can do about it. We can see that this play and Mr. Shaw's message receive an audience in Los Angeles and by helping this play and helping Contemporary Theatre put this play behind footlights, we are definitely not only helping a production to make a few dollars for the theatre, but we are encouraging playwrights like Mr. Shaw to write plays like these, and building up an audience.

I am thankful a group like the Contemporary Theatre exists in Los Angeles. By helping them produce this play, we are achieving three things; we are enabling Los Angeles audiences to see a swell play, we are promoting anti-war action, and we are helping to build a vital, intelligent, thrilling theatre in Los Angeles.

MR. STEWART: Dudley Nichols, whom you all know about for having done such good work on *The Informer*, for receiving the Academy Award, and for having turned down the Academy Award.

MR. NICHOLS: You excused Jimmy

Cagney on account of ill health. I see him sitting here several rows ahead of me. He should be taken on as the seventh corpse. (Laughter.)

Anything said after hearing this play read is very bad epilogue. I hoped we would hear Irwin Shaw, but we heard him certainly in a far greater presence than any individual could represent himself. Usually a play reading is the dull-est thing in the world. It is a testimonial to the play to be so stirring when it is read. I only wish that John Cromwell might direct Fredric and Mrs. March all the time.

Although Mr. Shaw isn't here, we all welcome him as a screen writer. He has written a very fine screen play—when I read it, I felt any director could take it out and shoot it.

I am happy to find out we all feel so here tonight. We are all moved and it's exciting to know so many people can feel these things and feel solidarity in them. I speak as an ex-officer in the war—so I speak with conviction. This is a fine anti-war play and there is a definite distinction between an anti-war play and a pacifist play.

You will recall the corpse who says that it is not enough to have died for Pharaoh, for Caesar, or for Rome; one must die only for something which he himself chooses that he would be willing to die for. When someone else has chosen the cause and you have nothing to say about it, you are not dying for the cause but against it. (Applause.)

CLIFFORD ODETS: I think we should all give a little thought to a few very important facts. The play we heard tonight brings these facts to the tip of our tongues—facts concerning the war dead, the war that ended in 1918. The slight amount killed was twelve million. The slight number of wounded was over twenty million. So far as costs are concerned, material costs, the last war cost our country one million dollars an hour. What we are doing here when we all come here, when our writers write plays like this one, when our actors and directors are interested enough to read them, is making ourselves an outpost of civilization. (Applause.) And what I think we all will agree upon is that more and more our kind of people must push forward until that outpost of civilization covers the whole damn world.

MR. STEWART: Is there anyone else who would like to say anything concerning this play?

VOICE: Let Jimmy Cagney get up and speak.

JAMES CAGNEY: Those are the words Donald Stewart wanted to hear. As a general thing I am absolutely at a loss.

I came here absolutely unprepared . . . but—anything that we can do to help promote Contemporary Theatre will not be amiss, and anything that I can do—play it—take any part whatsoever in the production of it, I will be glad to do.

FRANCIS LEDERER: We all think the same—that this play is great. However, in my opinion, this play has the same faults as many other anti-war plays that have been written—anti-war plays, books, motion pictures. It is not only sufficient in my opinion to touch upon a problem, it is necessary to carry out that problem to its ultimate. In this play, although there is honesty of conviction obvious, I think the author stopped in the middle of his way. He gives us an opinion upon the situation, but he does not say what to do about it. When it ended, I asked myself, Is this the end of the play? It must be probably the first act. Something is going to happen. Those dead are going to go out to the people—I thought they were going to let the people take the standpoint toward war; but it didn't come.

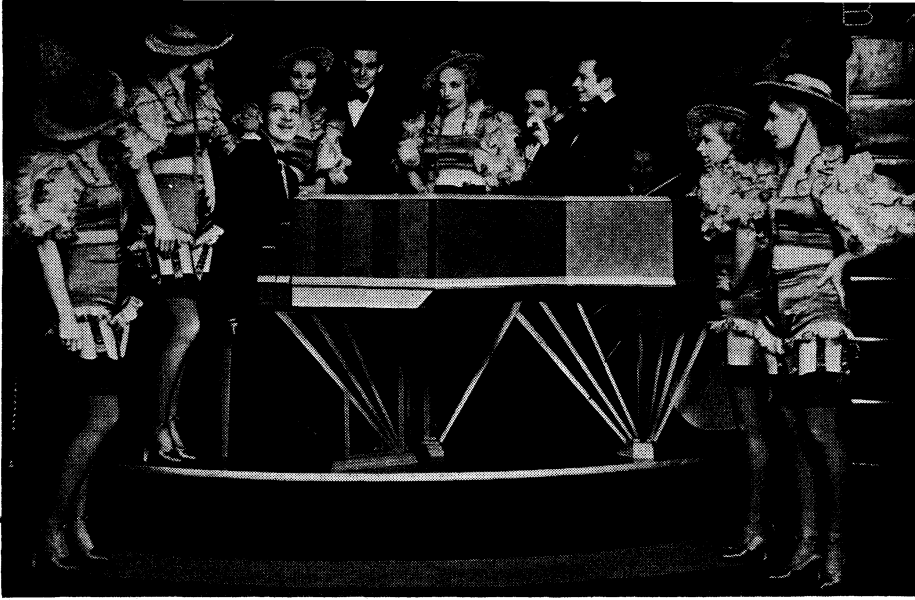
However, we must welcome even such a step as this play is. But apart from that, even if this play would have gone on for three acts, in my opinion it is not sufficient on a subject as vital as war or other equally important things in our life, just to stir up our emotions, just to bring us to the realization of those facts. In such a work the artist does not perform his work. It is the duty of an artist who touches such a problem to bring a solution, to bring us his work by showing us what we can do about it. (Applause.)

If you ladies and gentlemen are in doubt what can be done, if you should be in despair after having heard this play, and I hope you are, because it certainly was very moving—then I will tell you, inasmuch as I am in a position to tell you, that war is, if you all want it, done away with. It is not something we must be afraid of. If you will allow me, I will tell you in a few words how.

We live in a country where the people are the government. (Laughter and hisses.) Now listen—you are the government if you want to be. (Applause.) Because the government is there to do what you want, but as long as you do not care what the government does, naturally it does what it pleases to or what he, it, thinks you want it to do.

When you citizens of the United States thought it important enough to declare by a nation-wide popular vote that liquor should become legal in this country, liquor became legal. Don't you think it is at least as important that you should decide upon wars by nation-wide popular

(Continued on page 34)



Vandamm

## "Idiot's Delight"

### The Anatomy of a Success

BY DAVID SHEPPERD

Whatever else may be said of *Idiot's Delight*, Robert Sherwood's latest play and the Theatre Guild's final production of the season, one thing is clear: it is a smash. It is also a good show. It has color: A hotel in the Alps bordering on four countries, a cast of characters which includes a German scientist, a French pacifist, a munitions magnate, a tantalizing Russian lady who is half mountebank, half soothsayer; an articulate and racy American hooper, a bevy of night-club beauties. The play has literate lines and references that only readers of the better weeklies will properly appreciate: "Whoever wins (the war) Austria will lose," quotations from Thomas Mann, gibes at the stupidity of humankind, not unsympathetic allusions to radical ideas, and a depreciation of jingoism. It is performed by a company of smart and engaging actors. With all this, and above all, there is the theme of war (the author is definitely against it), not any war but the specific brand that nowadays we chew every morning with our breakfast.

Such a play cannot and must not be dismissed. Its appeal is extremely broad. Its reflection of its fairly-well-to-do middle-class audience, our dominant audience for higher grade best sellers and S. R. O. successes, is almost perfect. Analyze and understand this play and you will have learned much about a great section of our cosmopolitan public.

Structurally *Idiot's Delight* is rather loose: there is not much plot and very little conflict in the sense of a struggle of wills. Most of the characters are caught in a situation over which they have no control and to which they do not see their own relation except as passive victims. The French "internationalist" is an exception, but at the outbreak of war the author shows that he loses his pacifist

convictions and dies with a patriotic exclamation on his lips. (What is this "internationalist?" A synthetic figure without sharp definition. If he were a Radical-Socialist he would not call for "revolution," if he were a Socialist he would not speak of Lenin as his leader, if he were a Communist he would not hope to stave off war simply by an appeal to reason.) The German scientist is working on a cure for cancer, but when his fatherland is threatened he decides to give up his work, since humanity is not worth saving (although his country is apparently worth dying for). The Russian lady of doubtful origin hates war, but she has been the mistress of a big munitions manufacturer for some time. The hooper apparently feels that if makers of armaments were put out of the way most of the trouble would be gone, but he never really encounters the villain (the munitions manufacturer) and the latter himself makes the presumably unanswerable point that he is fulfilling a task which was not set by himself alone. "Why are there no answers to my questions?" the hooper asks despondently. The truth is (a) the questions are not properly put, (b) he doesn't ask the right people, (c) he isn't really a character, for a person as evolved as he is supposed to be might come closer at least to some theoretical answers!

Given these figures and circumstances there can be little drama. Instead there is conversation: bright, wistful, sexy, cultural, like an expensive steamship ad, and political in the intriguing manner of a New Yorker editorial. To lend punch and pathos to the situation we have the bang and br-r-r-ing of an off-stage war. However, the dish would lack intellectual piquancy if there were not some semblance of social comment; so we have a chorus number done cutely by Alfred Lunt and *les girls* which is interrupted by

the sudden entrance of the internationalist who screams that Paris has been bombarded, that they are all dancing in a world in ruins. But it is to be remarked that it is the dance number, with its lights, its bare thighs, its playfulness, and not the interruption, which is applauded and remembered by the audience.

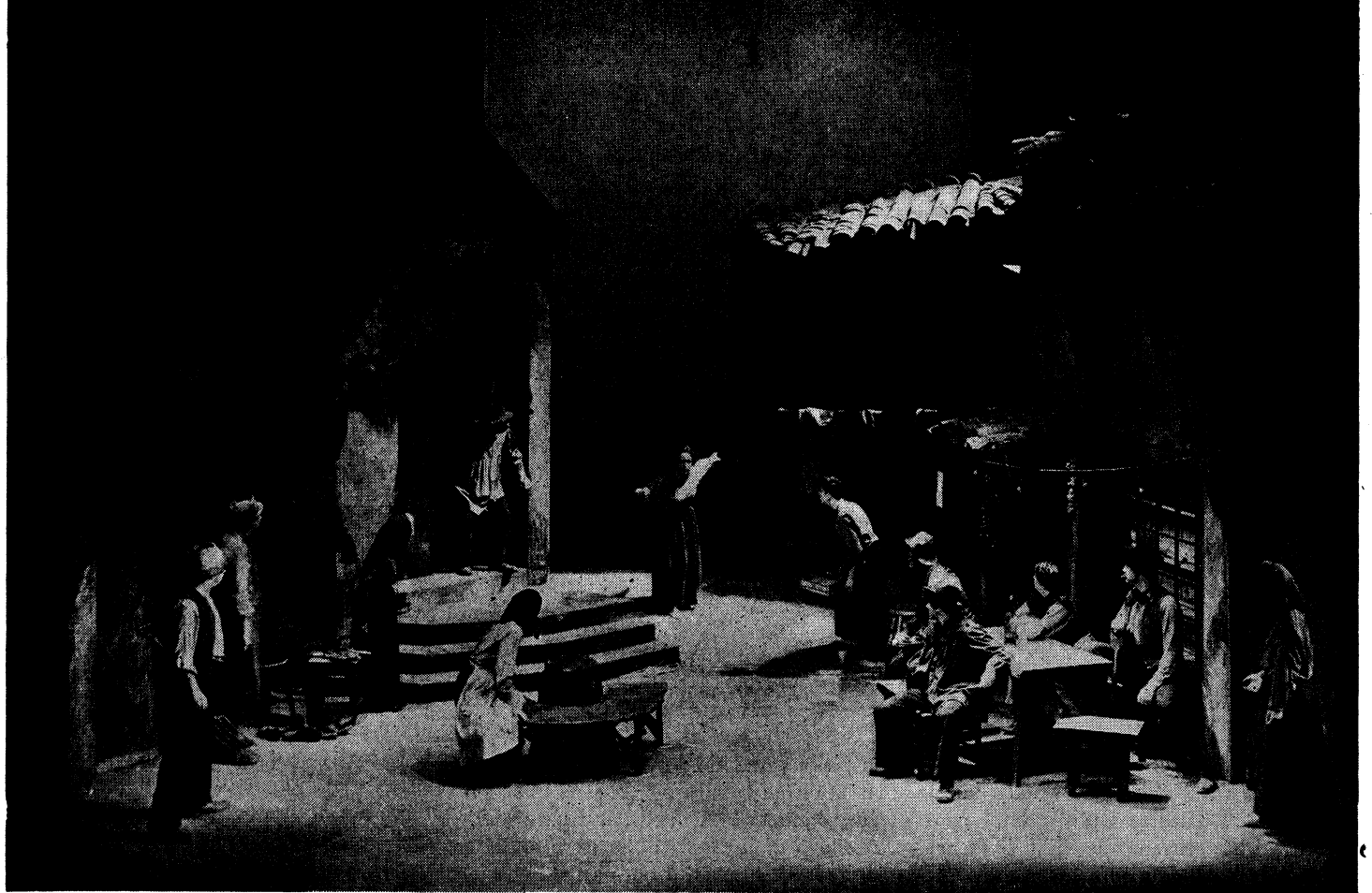
Where does all this lead? At the end of the play the hooper and the Russian lady alone in the hotel defy death that is being hurled down on the mountain by bombing war planes. He plays the piano and she clings to him. "We are the real people," she says, "and we know that the deadliest weapons are the most merciful"—and with that the curtain falls. In other words, these two (symbolical) artists who are the playboys and wantons of civilization express the idea that in this crazy cruel, but rather nice world of ours it is really best to die. There is no consistent intelligence, there is no justice, there are no heroes, no valid fighters. If one dies then let it be at least with humor, music, a dash of romance and philosophy. It is the spirit of sorrowful acquiescence. You shake your head, sigh and permit what you deplore.

Is it pessimism? Not at all: pessimism suggests pain and the public in our theatre will not pay for that. Just as the play's action is loose and the characters only partly defined, so the tone of the play never mounts to anything like a dangerous tension. The quality is pleasant throughout without any palpable blood-pressure. Art can arise from decadence, it can even arise from despair, hate or mockery. But for art to arise from them they must be clear through a certain degree of force, of completeness, of experience. When ingredients of popular sentiment and prevalent notions are distilled and thinned down to fit the tastes of nearly everybody, you can really concern nobody and you get at best only entertainment.

A play of this kind might take on fresh meaning in a creative theatre. The Guild production is on the level of the play, in an undifferentiated way. It is a neat package. Mr. Lunt is an actor (there aren't so many) and he has a certain spicy sense of characterization, though he fails to convey any *complete person*. . . . The last moment in the show reveals the nature of the whole production: positively and negatively. The air raid is raging and the two chief characters are at the piano. What is the relationship of these two elements? What impels the two people to go to the piano: fear, defiance, desire to drown out the hateful noise, bravado? Nothing is clear: the two characters simply sit there, a light shines up on their faces, a pretty picture is made.



*Vandamm*



A SCENE IN THE FONTAMARA SQUARE IN "BITTER STREAM"

Vandamm

## Perspectives—Past and Present

BY JOHN W. GASSNER

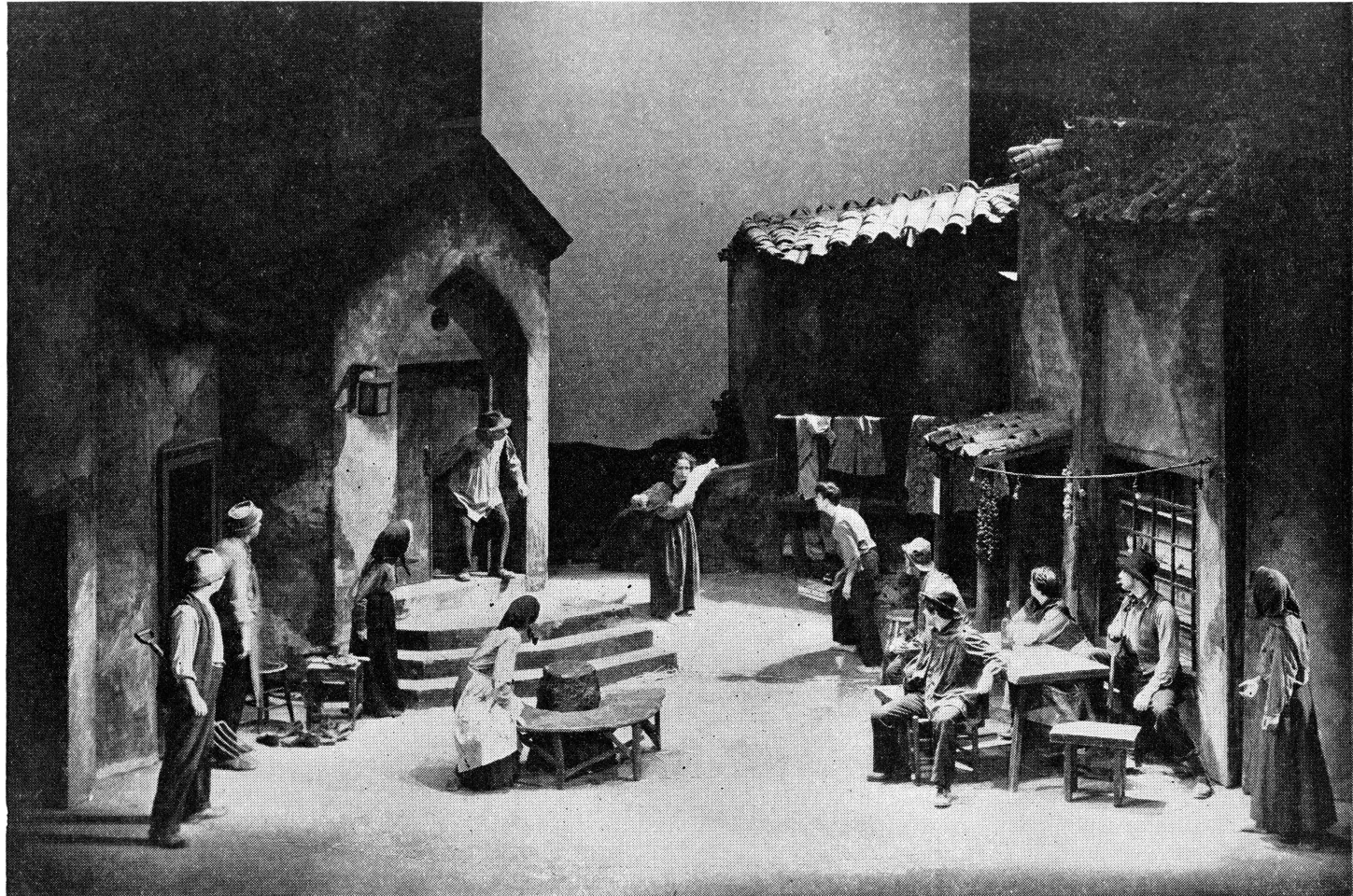
Man's inhumanity to man is an eternal verity of the theatre. But the perspective changes; evil ascribed to one cause in a fourth century Athens becomes evil ascribed to another cause in sixteenth century London or twentieth century New York. Nor is there any guarantee of uniformity of perspective within a given period; especially in one which, like our own, is torn by conflicting and shifting allegiances. To choose a perspective is to determine the direction and meaning of a play. To discover the perspective is to understand the play. Such decidedly divergent plays as *Bitter Stream*, *St. Joan* and *Murder in the Cathedral*, three of the most provocative productions of the closing season, make sense only when viewed in the light of their objectives.

T. S. Eliot's object in *Murder in the Cathedral* is primarily devotional; Shaw's approach to Joan of Arc is socio-psychological; Victor Wolfson's (like that of his model, Ignazio Silone, author of the novel upon which *Bitter Stream* is founded) is plainly sociological. Eliot is attesting the drama of religious faith; Shaw, the conflict of the progressive individual with a declining social order; Wolfson, the tragedy of a class. Correspondingly, the dramatic effect varies from the religious fervor of *Murder in*

*the Cathedral*, to the explorative analysis, the precise diagnosis of *St. Joan*, to the hot indignation of *Bitter Stream*. At the same time, the force of the plays depends upon the relevance of the point of view. How intimately can we be involved in a drama of faith or historical investigation or immediate protest? Much depends on the workmanship, but a good deal also depends upon the playgoer's own perspective. It would be stretching a point to say that many of us will find the conflict between the medieval church and state—the issue of T. S. Eliot's play—of vital concern, though the simpler problem of faith might prove illuminating. Shaw's drama, while drawing the attention of all intelligent audiences, would find its staunchest following among persons still enjoying a measure of neutrality in the conflicts of the day. Wolfson's drama about fascist dictatorship should impress every thinking individual, but would ring the tocsin loudest in the ears of the working class and the intellectuals. This fairly distinct stratification of interest indicates little more than that the world in which we are living is a divided one. But the division is a reality that a playwright reflects as inevitably as he breathes; that the theatre reflects *so long* as it breathes. And the situation is

further complicated by the fact that the playwright, like so many of his fellowmen, is more often than not divided against himself. But this, too, is an aesthetic as well as general reality, to be gauged and adjudicated before his work can be understood.

There is no inner or outer uncertainty about *Bitter Stream*. Victor Wolfson knows a wrong when he dramatizes one. His viewpoint is definite and direct. His dramatization strikes at the heart of the Fascist order in Italy when it exposes the plight of the simple, unpolitical peasants of Fontamara. The regimentation of thought which the play ridicules so acidulously is of concern to everyone who prizes the erect posture which distinguishes man from the lower animals. Fascism, however, has too often boasted its contempt for the intellect to be vulnerable in the cerebral department. But it has always vaunted itself the one-and-only defender of the little man. Yet the play makes it abundantly clear that while fascism has been only too ready to stuff his mouth and ears, it has had no such plans for his stomach. The Italian peasants, being damnably insensitive to fine logic when they are threatened with hunger, rise in spontaneous revolt. Their uprising is crushed, but they have learned



A SCENE IN THE FONTAMARA SQUARE IN "BITTER STREAM"

*Vandamm*

the truth about their government, and are groping for a solution when the play ends. "What must we do?" they ask themselves.

*Bitter Stream* makes a vivid and vastly appealing drama. That it should achieve so much power is a tribute to its vital exposition, born of a perspective that embraces the laboring masses rather than the special classes. It has the clarity and definiteness that always follow when a playwright knows what the fight is about and who the fighters are. Would that it also enjoyed the dramaturgic and directorial skill it deserves! Unfortunately, despite a rich variety of moods and situations, the play is uneven and often labored. Its first act becomes wordy and diffuse. Its satire, though effective in ridiculing regimentation of opinion, blunts its blade with too much caricature. Thus, the mayor of the village and the police official are too idiotic to be effective as villains. Here, as elsewhere, the direction is stilted and insensitive. In spite of fine characterization by Manart Kippen, an appealing performance by Lili Eisenlohr Valenty and appropriate spurts of strength by Albert Van Dekker, the Theatre Union has not given the play its full complement of theatric investiture.

But, conversely, the production would have benefited from more fully considered playwrighting. Though the second act is utterly moving, one misses the dramatization of such exciting events as the revolt of the peasantry, mentioned but not seen, and the diversion of the stream, merely indicated off-stage. Though the conclusion makes poignant use of the groping of the peasants engrossed in composing their first underground paper, it does not constitute a fully dramatized scene and is hardly the most forceful climax one would imagine. The new social theatre sometimes evinces a fondness for leaflets as a dramatic device which I cannot share. Logic is on the side of the leaflets, and they may well play an important rôle in history, but not all of us find paper on the stage exciting. It is, further, regrettable that Berardo's self-sacrifice, comprising the bulk of the final act, should be developed so rigidly and scantily. He assumes the blame for distributing incendiary leaflets, sacrificing his life in order to save an organizer of the underground movement whom he considers more important than himself. The latter accepts the sacrifice too easily. There may be sound logic in this idea, but it requires more emotional motivation. Intellectual motivation is inadequate unless dramatized at sufficient length, as Shaw knew when he devoted two of the most rounded scenes of *St. Joan* to historical matters. Moreover, Berardo has loomed so large

in the earlier scenes as a potential leader that his dismissal from the play as an individual of secondary importance is open to misconstruction. The play might almost imply that a peasant like Berardo is incapable of leadership; an implication not intended by the playwright, and contradicted by the building of an underground movement among the peasantry after Berardo's death.

Nevertheless there is no gainsaying the effect of the play. In its simple, rugged manner it unrolls a tragic situation applicable to large sections of the world and of equal importance to America. It should sound a warning against the demagoguery that is straining every tear-duct with generous pity for the poor whom it intends to gag and mulct. The story of the Fontamarans is history charged with lightning immediacy.

### The Case of Bernard Shaw

Wolfson and Silone are expressing a protest; Shaw, when he wrote *St. Joan*, was carrying on an investigation. The dozen or more years that have elapsed since its initial production have increased the possibility of understanding its place in Shaw's repertory. Not only has the experience of the world added much necessary clarification, but the author has come to our assistance with several later plays and a number of pronouncements. So, in a sense, has the current Katharine Cornell production, one of the most lucid as well as affecting examples of modern theatre art.

The production, no field day for a star like Miss Cornell, who belongs to the highest firmament, but a marvel of collective effort, throws the emphasis where

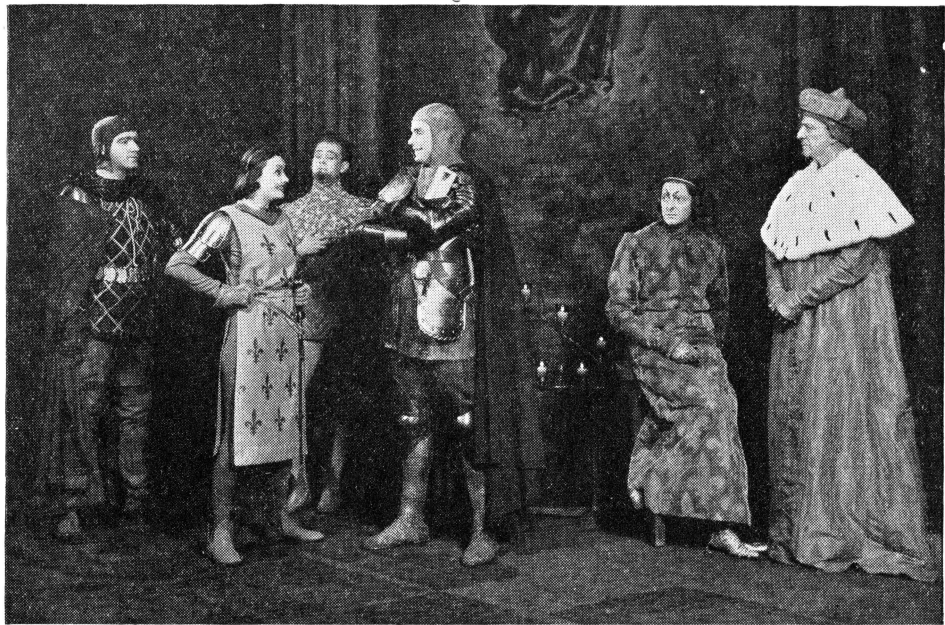
it is most appropriate—upon the history. Each character is individualized and yet related to the institution he represents. Brian Aherne is not only Warwick, but in his palpable assurance and worldliness, he is the entire feudal order. Cianelli and Byron are not merely priests of God but the very reason and order of the medieval church. Miss Cornell is not solely Joan of Arc, but the simple, partially masculinized womanhood of all the peasantry, as well as the very incarnation of youthful revolt against age and lassitude and caution. If, quite against Shaw's prescription, her femininity is never quite suppressed, neither is it too obtrusive. Above all, we are grateful that there is no villainy in the performances, not the faintest caricaturing of the Archbishop and the Jesuit. Joan's antagonists condemn themselves solely by the principles they exemplify. Only the slight buffooning in the court scene mars the production, but not radically. Altogether, Shaw's word becomes flesh without ever becoming carrion.

*St. Joan* deals with an injustice, but with reference to an individual, rather than a class. Joan wins impassioned sympathy, and her persecutors a measure of opprobrium, but in line with Shaw's spirit of inquiry the drama revolves around a series of questions. What was the secret of Joan's success on the field of battle? Pure hypnotism or mental suggestion, is Shaw's reply; she breathed courage into the defeated troops. Why was she done to death? Of course the British, whom she was driving out of France, wanted her out of the way. But why did the French allow her to perish, and why did the Church that later canonized her order her to be burnt at the



SCENE FROM KATHARINE CORNELL'S "SAINT JOAN"

Vandamm



SCENE FROM KATHARINE CORNELL'S "SAINT JOAN"

*Vandamm*





"MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL"

Performance photo by Martin Harris

stake? Shaw concludes that she was the victim of a profound, if still undefined, social conflict, the first phase of the struggle between declining feudalism and emergent capitalism. She was guilty of both political and religious heresy when, reflecting the new spirit of the people, she exemplified the progressive tendencies of her time — namely, nationalism and Protestantism. Her self-assurance told her that she, a child of the people, could confer and collaborate with the central authority, the king, without the interposition of the feudal nobility, making the latter superfluous. By the same token she would communicate directly with her God without the help or so much as the guidance of the Church. She could be acquitted on a dozen or more popularly understood charges which were not fundamental, but the Church could not forgive her Protestantism.

Shaw's analysis is a masterpiece of intellectual construction, in dramatic terms so powerful as to refute forever the notion that reasoning and argument are alien to

drama. He has often been derided for his borrowings. Shaw, however, borrowed shrewdly in *St. Joan* when he ignited his imagination with a spark from the Marxian theory of history.

But Shaw has also borrowed from Shaw! One notes his preference for quips which we must sometimes forgive him, his gift for oratory which one admires in him, and most considerably, his fondness for the exceptional individual. His own brilliance, his Fabianism (with its socialism from above!), his scorn for the Victorianism of his youth, and his sizable borrowings from Europe's most confusing philosopher, Nietzsche, have disposed him in favor of superior beings. His supermen and superwomen have notably enriched the field of comedy, but in none of the other plays, not even in *Candida*, is there so warmly, so humanly conceived a brilliant character as Joan. The other characters have been largely remote figures, sports of nature, mouthpieces of a very voluble dramatist. It is otherwise with the peasant girl from Lorraine. She

is bright but not infallible, superior to fools but not wiser than wise men, merely more bravely young. Hers is the collective intelligence, the superior common sense of the common people. We are in love with her because she is one of us—so high and dazzling and yet so near in her simplicity, so frail in her person and yet so strong with the strength of the common man who has held his own through long dark ages of struggle with natural and man-made evils. In *St. Joan* there is a synthesis between the private individual, upon whose infinite appeal depends the surging personal emotion of the play, and the collective phenomenon, the struggle between an old and new world. It is understandable that Shaw should have reached the summit of his art here; he reasons and feels at the same time as never before.

Masterpieces, however, do not as a rule merely flatter their creator; by shedding light upon his work as a whole, they are as likely to reveal his vulnerability as his strength. How easily could Joan have become just another Shavian character—just too clever to be alive? How easily could her drama have become an oversimplified Shavian conflict between intelligence and a consistently stupid world? The epilogue in which her antagonists confess their error, though otherwise eloquent and beautiful, verges on this error. Burning obscuring incense to Joan the superwoman, the epilogue, with its sentimental after-thought of pity for all superiority in the world, detracts from the body of the play, which needs no addenda to its splendid analysis. The epilogue causes no basic damage because the architecture of *St. Joan* is too strong to be shaken; but it throws a revealing light on Shaw, who is for socialism on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and for fascism on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Worship of the superman, along with Fabianism, has left the grand old man stranded in a world which mere intelligence has been unable to save.

### The Case of T. S. Eliot

A transition from Shaw to Eliot is not as fantastic as would seem. Many a brilliant man has been propelled by intellectual confusion and disappointment into the bosom of the Church. If George Sorel, father of French syndicalism and author of *Reflections on Violence* was, why shouldn't Eliot, the poet! In *Murder in the Cathedral*, America's erstwhile *enfant terrible* writes from his new perspective. There are two worlds—Satan's and Christ's. But Eliot is too intelligent to believe that one can live by mere gen-

(Continued on page 36)



"MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL"

*Performance photo by Martin Harris*

# American Writers Organize

BY ELEANOR FLEXNER

American writers — whether novelists, playwrights, screen, radio and song writers or magazine contributors— are beginning to realize that they face common problems which can only be solved by joint action. This fact is being demonstrated again and again wherever writers are fighting for their interests, at copyright bill hearings in Washington, along Broadway, and in Hollywood.

The need for the widest possible organization has been nowhere more clearly evinced than in the current deadlock between the dramatists and the theatrical managers. Still refusing to accept the Dramatists' Guild Minimum Basic Agreement, the managers are now declaring that they can get plays from writers not members of the Guild. There is little basis in real fact for this contention. Nevertheless it serves to show the importance of all writers being affiliated in a closed shop under the Authors' League, since such organization would preclude any possibility of a threat of this kind.

Another instance is the Duffy Copyright Bill, which strikes at the fundamental interest of every writer by aiming to take away his control over the integrity of his material, a right which he has only acquired by twenty years' struggle. Only united action by writers of all kinds will defeat this measure, which is apparently being pushed by important interests connected with motion pictures and radio.

Fortunately there are signs that the writers are aware of the issues and are facing them. For one thing, the recent reorganization of the Authors' League of America, by which the three member guilds—Authors, Dramatists and Screen Writers—have vested control and authority in a central governing body, the Authors' League Council, marks a long step towards the consolidation and strengthening of the writers' forces. Basically, this closer affiliation of the Guilds is an attempt, not only to centralize control, but to break down craft distinctions between different types of writers. In a struggle such as the present one between the playwrights and the managers, it throws the full weight of the League's membership behind the writers.

In line with the trend expressed by this reorganization, the League has already announced plans for organizing new branches of the writing field: radio and magazine writers, etc. Only a nationwide closed shop will give these writers adequate protection, or insure all writers against strike-breaking in their attempts

to secure their rights. The present struggle between the dramatists and the managers is a crucial factor in this program. One of the most hotly-debated clauses in the Minimum Basic Contract is that vesting sole ownership of his material in the playwright. As long as he shares such ownership with the manager, the playwright lacks the necessary freedom of action to support such wider organization. Hence this clause, which is vexing the managers more than any other, is the one point on which the writers will not yield.

The dramatists' strike has other implications besides cooperation among the writers. Although it seems probable that the dramatists will win, they should realize that over-confidence is apt to be a boomerang, and each week that the strike continues should teach them that much more clearly that a battle fought alone is inevitably longer and harder. Forgetting, perhaps, that it was the support of the Musicians' and Stagehands' unions which enabled the actors to win the Equity strike in 1919, the Dramatists' Guild has made no effort to enlist the aid of the other theatrical trade unions. It may have bitter reason to regret this omission. Some of the managers have already hinted that the use of motion picture money to combat the dramatists is not impossible, which would strengthen their forces. If the fight continues into next season, the dramatists may have to make their own presentations, which will require, not only solidarity among the writers themselves, but active cooperation from the other theatrical unions.

As regards developments concerning the debated contract, the substitution of a 60-40 division of moving picture money (60% to the playwright and 40% to the manager), and the extension of this ratio to all subsidiary rights: stock, amateur and radio, is a democratic step, representing a distinct gain for the general membership, at the same time that it is also acceptable to the managers. The latter, however (as we go to press), still refuse to accept the revised contract. Incidentally, the accusation that the new contract is detrimental to the interests of young writers is belied by the fact that no less than eight plays, *all first plays*, have already been sold under the terms of the new contract, while *twenty-two new members* have joined the Guild since the strike began!

However, undue confidence on the part

of the dramatists is unwarranted. The possibility of retaliatory measures with the aid of picture money has already been pointed out. There is in addition the ever-present danger, in a strike, that unity and morale may not be maintained. The dramatists should make unremitting use of such strong weapons as public statements like Sidney Howard's excellent article in the Sunday New York Times (April 12th), meetings and publicity, to maintain their unbroken front and educate their membership.

The need for the closest and most constant contact between the leadership and membership in all the Guilds has been clearly demonstrated by the recent mess over the Duffy Bill, which might conceivably have led to serious disruption in the Authors' League. Because of the publication of a garbled version of a speech by John Howard Lawson before a House of Representatives' committee—a speech authorized and planned by the League leadership—a number of screen writers, influenced more by the producers' interests than those of their profession, sent a telegram to Washington repudiating Mr. Lawson as their spokesman. What was worse they were able to get a number of misguided Guild members, among them members of the Dramatists' Guild Council, to join them. According to a statement of the Authors' League: "This telegram was written without any knowledge of the Duffy Bill or investigation of the circumstances under which Mr. Lawson's speech was delivered and in complete disregard of the fact that the Authors' League was, as an organization, opposing the bill in the interests of its four thousand members."

That the signers of the telegram subsequently reversed their stand on the Duffy Bill does not alter the fact that the entire incident was a striking illustration of the need of (1) general membership education, (2) the necessity of inculcating the membership with a sense of responsibility to their organization.

On May 2 the membership of the Screen Writers' Guild meets to vote on entry into the re-organized Authors' League under the terms already ratified by the Authors' and Dramatists' Guilds. It will be an historic occasion, since it marks the screen writers' first step toward the adoption of a closed shop in the moving picture industry at the same time that it carries one step further the alignment of all writers in a common front.

# The Trade Paper Racket

BY S. F. VAN BUREN



**I** don't understand actors and directors and writers. They're always beefing. Sometimes they stop beefing long enough to get together and put over some improvement in their status in the industry. But the effort tires them so they have to lie down—and ever after they take it lying down—on the edge of a swimming pool, of course. We don't pay any attention to them here in Hollywood. We say, if they don't like it here, why don't they go back where they came from and let us make our pictures by a process of spontaneous combustion.

Frequently the writers and actors carry the chip about each other and about directors. And directors occasionally mumble in their long gray beards about both writers and actors. But there is one point on which they all get together—to beef, of course—and that point is the film trade papers. Scratch any writer, director or actor and you will open up a jet of indignant steam about the racketeering that goes on under the apparently respectable jackets of the trade papers.

In the East the profession doesn't bother much about racketeers, because the racketeers don't bother much about the profession. Its members aren't rich enough in essential oils. But out here they are (while they last). And so they

have been subjected to a little blood transfusion, after which you will find them on a diet of Beef and Whine. Exclusively. In their hearts they accept the credo that you have to submit to a little racketeering when you are in a prominent position—but not prominent enough to do the racketeering yourself.

Of course the most publicized racketeer out here is St. Louella. Everybody knows about the rooms she sets aside at Christmas to accommodate the blood sacrifices laid on her altar. Once she left her car in the street loaded with holiday loot, and some iconoclastic competitor hi-jacked the load. Louella for once passed up the chance for a misquotation. She didn't even stop to say Robinson Crusoe. She went straight to the phone and informed each of the donors of the calamity. Louella whines even when she hasn't been on the short side of a stick-up. Those phone calls must have been the cat's meow. Needless to say, nobody—not even the writer who spread the story—failed to supply a duplicate present. After all, it's not the gift, it's the spirit behind it. . . .

But among the real trade paper racketeers, Louella rates as a moocher. They put her in the category of the social racketeers, to be had for as low as an invitation to a yachting party. And her slug consists of a few left-handed jabs which are a little too pointed to be inept and much too stupid to be vicious. If she's very, very cross with you, she leaves you out of her column entirely—which is not much more dangerous than being in it with your name misspelled, or coupled with a play you never wrote or acted in and never liked. Being on Marion's team, she has to be awfully, awfully catty to the girls Marion won't play with. There's something almost pathetic in the way she damns (with faint praise) girls like Joan Crawford, who got too many breaks at M.G.M. Occasionally she cracks down on Princess Norma for the same reason—but with cotton batting on the type hammers, of course. But it's just too, too, TOO, when she goes into battle, her fountain pen loaded with mustard gas, against a real Big Bertha. Mae West is said to have cracked wise that her next picture was to be called *The Private Life of Marion Davies*—or *Hearst by Her Own Petard*. . . .

The trade papers, on the other hand, know where the real gold veins are located and how to apply the drills. When a preview of any picture is announced,

salesmen from *Daily Variety*, the *Film Daily*, the *Reporter*, the *Motion Picture Daily*, the *Motion Picture Herald*, *Filmograph*, and any other feeble daily or hardy annual drop in on all the people involved—director, writers, producer and cast. Those afraid of an unfavorable review, or tempted by the prospect of a good one, are “persuaded” to take out an ad. If that does not work, there is a call after the review has appeared.

For years the writers, directors and actors have grouched about the holdup. Not that I wish to imply that Ungar or Quigley or Wilkerson ever dangle the sack of gumdrops or brandish the loaded gun. No, no, of course not. Can they help it if most ad men use that technique? There has to be cooperation between the critical, editorial and sales force of a paper. There is something incongruous about the proximity of one item in the advertising column stating that Joe Doakes is a hell of a great artist—and one in the review section saying that his last picture gives off the odor of tired cantaloupe. The ad can't be eliminated—it's been paid for. But the criticism can have a little dental work done on it. All in the name of consistency. And if that amelioration strikes Mr. Doakes as a good reason for renewing his ad, there's no reason for applying hard words like blackmail—is there?

The *Variety* policy of “no interference with reviewers”—the invariable rule laid down by Sime Silverman, the founder, to preclude any dishonest connection between the business office and the editorial staff, gradually underwent a subtle change when Arthur Ungar took over the Hollywood office. In time Ungar was hanging his chin over the reviewer's shoulder to be sure buyers of page ads would have something to quote in their page advertising.

At a recent garden party, when somebody kicked over a log, a popular vote was taken to name the animal that hurried away. It was christened Arthur. Ungar's popularity extends far beyond the writing, acting and directing group. Among his ex-staff men, he is unanimously given ranking privilege above beriberi and just below Asiatic cholera. And his ex-staff comprises quite a group of reviewers and ad salesmen. His labor turnover is forty or fifty a year. Of the five or six men he takes on at a time, for trial, some at least have a movie acquaintanceship. After a man has tapped the half dozen friends who can be persuaded to help

him out on a new job, he is no longer Good News around Variety. But his friends' accounts have to be paid up.

Daily Variety always has on hand a closet-full of suits by departed ad men unable to collect commissions due them. If a man has \$400 in commissions coming to him, and the bills on \$400 worth of advertising have not been paid, he cannot collect his commissions when he leaves.

Ungar saw *The Front Page* and got a bad case of hero worship on the editor in that play. In dealing with his employees, he has ever since seen himself in the Osgood Perkins role, dramatically bullying and pepping up his men and being quite fascinating about it all.

One evening his whole staff reported back to the office at closing time, with no advertising sold. Ungar went *Front Page*. Raging and cursing, he locked the door. No so-and-so would leave that office until ads were dug up. Through dinner and far into the evening, his staff sweated at the telephones. Unfortunately nobody got any ads and at 11:30 Arthur had to let them go. Needless to say, they all enjoyed working under such persuasive tactics. Ungar's net income at that time was only \$60,000 a year—25 to 30 per cent. overall commission on advertising that came out of Southern California—full share for what he personally brought in—and a split with the boys who legged in the rest.

Ungar is always willing to close a deal that the boys have started. He begins by whining. "You know how nice we've been to you. Now it's your chance to be nice to us—" But if that doesn't work he begins to steam up, and the threats fly—not necessarily the direct slug of bad reviews—but hints of his drag with the Powers That Fee. The trade paper policy is not so much to bear down in reviews, as to ignore the boys who won't play ball, and plug the ones who do. But of course there are plenty of spots for digs in the news columns.

Ungar has anywhere from fifty to seventy-five feuds on at all times. You can't help making enemies when, in addition to your own business, you are trying to run other people's, too. If a theatre manager did not immediately come down to admit him—but kept the great Ungar waiting outside—the great Ungar had that man fired. You don't believe it? Ask Fred Menielly, who later became the Erlanger representative out here, how he happened to lose his previous job. Ungar has built up the strongest army of people-who-have-to-thank-him-for-loss-of-jobs in Hollywood, where the competition for that honor is pretty keen.

One of Ungar's ex-staff formed the

habit of sending affectionate greetings to Ungar from all parts of the world. Whenever he happened to be, he dug up a picture post card of the local jail or the cemetery or the leper colony and sent it to Arthur with the tender inscription, "Wish you was here—"

Another ace reviewer who had the bad habit of laughing off Ungar's suggestions that he "be nice" to advertisers, had to find himself another job. Not that Ungar fired him. He merely gave him less and less important pictures to review until finally he was covering only the independent product where his scathing pen could do no real damage. Trade papers have to deal so much in heavy sugar that a balance must be struck. Terrific blasts against the little fellows who can't hit back and whose pictures should not be judged by the same standards that apply to products costing twenty times as much, keep that balance. Some panning and some boosting. What could be fairer? Ungar continued the fight with his ex-reviewer, making statements which caused the young man to buy a page in another paper, in which to answer them. The answer read—"To the unscrupulous representative of Variety—Your statements are as false as your teeth."

Ungar, who openly confesses that he is a friend of Captain "Red" Hines, the head of the lion cage of the Red arena, has been known covertly to threaten to

inform Hines about anti-capitalist utterances. Nobody in Ungar's or Hines' family was around, probably, when some boys and girls took a pleasure trip to America to found a country where a man was not to be persecuted for his religious or political beliefs.

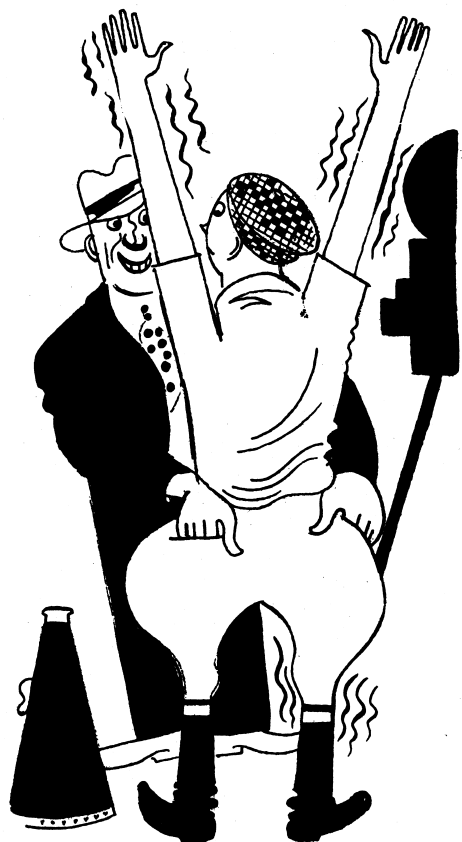
To sum up, Arthur is the boy who has gone on record time and again as saying that the trouble with the movie business is greed for gold!

Martin Quigley publishes the Motion Picture Daily, the Motion Picture Herald and the Motion Picture Almanac. As part of the Hays United Front, he has easy access to the heads of the various companies. Quigley has been a pal of the producers since 1929, when he got rid of a number of small-time trade papers, by amalgamating them into the M. P. Herald. In exchange for that service, he received five-year advertising contracts from the studio heads.

Quigley's tactics differ from Ungar's. He uses the velvet glove of the Legion of Decency and the silken domino of the Production Code. He is a hundred per cent Roman Catholic politician. When the contract of his pal Hays was in danger of expiring and something had to be done to make the Generalissimo of the Smokescreen once more indispensable to the industry—in those stirring days when the Legion of Decency sprang into existence, Quigley was everywhere along the embattled front—on both sides and in the middle: with Father Lord in St. Louis launching the Legion of Decency—with Hays—with the producers, helping them combat the menace of fanatical censorship. He claims credit for arranging the final Locarno pact. He claims parenthood of the Production Code.

Having spent his own time and money playing referee and fullback on both sides, Quigley felt he was entitled to some recompense. He got ready his Twentieth Anniversary Edition. He sent two boys named Shapiro and Cron to point out to the producers all he had done to keep the Church from forging fanatical chains around them and how they owed it to him, in gratitude, to come through for his Twentieth Anniversary Number.

He claims his next credit for having placed Joe Breen in his job at the Hays office. One of the high-pressure boys Quigley brought from New York told a producer that for three months beforehand, Breen was schooled by Quigley in the latter's New York office. Quigley and Hays engineered the elevation of Breen from Chairman of the Publicity Directors Committee to Chief of the Production Code after Breen, in New York, told the assembled producers in a fiery speech how much they needed him and Hays to battle the Legion of Decency. This



Gus Peck

ousted Col. Jason Joy, who was given a consolation job by Winnie Sheehan. Although Louis B. Mayer fought tooth and nail against the shift, Sheehan, Breen and Quigley won the battle and the One-Man censorship of the American Motion Picture business was turned over to Quigley's protégé.

Definitely allied with the Academy, the discredited company union which the producers used for years to dupe the studio workers, Quigley has been further discredited lately by the revelation that he borrowed \$50,000 from the Erpi Corporation, a subsidiary of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. When news of this loan was made public, Quigley hastened to protest the non-political character of the loan and to deny its obvious implications. But the damage had been done and the industry now knows why Quigley's sympathies in the past have been pro-Otterson-Erpi and pro-American Liberty League. For Duponts prove their allegiance to Quigley by advertising Dupont film negative exclusively in Quigley publications to the infinite annoyance of the other trade papers. The Quigley advertising boys say to the Quigley reviewing boys—"Give this guy a plug—he bought space." They can't bite the hand that's feeding them. And neither can Quigley. . . .

Quigley tried to break into Hollywood with a daily and sank \$175,000 in the venture. It failed because it was recognized as a company union organ. Possibly he finds some consolation in his Annual—the Motion Picture Almanac—a directory patterned after the Film Daily Year Book. The Annual racket consists in putting the zing on the boys and girls once a year at the rate of \$200 a page for a complimentary ad in a directory. Two hundred pages of advertising at \$200 a page will give some idea of the intake.

The extra rackets—Anniversary numbers—Writers', Actors', Directors' numbers—Special Studio Sections—Christmas Numbers and International numbers naturally warrant a little additional suave pressure from the sales boys. It wouldn't look good if *you* stayed out when everybody else was in—now, would it? There is also considerable gravy in the Congratulatory numbers. Occasions arise three or four times a year for getting out a special Marcus Loew number, or a Fanchon and Marco number, or an Adolph Zukor number. The publishers don't stop at the actors, directors and writers on these sandbag issues, which run as high as 500 pages. If you are an office boy working for Zukor, the salesman points out to you the necessity for showing loyalty. So you club in with twelve other office boys for a fifteen dollar ad somewhere in a hidden corner. It

doesn't do you much good with your public, but 500 pages at \$100 a page is a tidy little jack-pot for the publisher.

The racket isn't even confined to studio employees. The ad men visit the gentleman who sells toilet paper to a theatre in Peoria, and the one who sells chewing-gum-remover to a house in Cheyenne, and hook him for an ad in Better Theatres or Box Office. Quigley and Shlyen have a corner on that racket. Although it uses the same tactics as the other papers, Shlyen's sheet, Box Office, is a flea in a land of leeches.

Filmograph was run for a decade by a man named Harry Burns. People used to advertise with Burns largely because of their personal liking or their personal sympathy or because they could pay for their ads in meals and potatoes. Maybe because the rates were not high, or because Burns never did anybody any harm, he didn't make a financial success of Filmograph. It was heavily mortgaged—and eventually it passed out of his hands. The present owners have inaugurated a new kink in the advertising racket. Most stars, on being bearded, pass the buck to their agents. "Call up John—if it's okay with John, it's okay with me." Whereupon the paper calls up the agent—or the press agent and asks for copy on the star. "He's just taken out a half page—it's all set—and he said we should get the copy from you." If the agent sends over the copy, he and the star can fight it out between themselves, later, as to who authorized the ad.

Any studio employee can ingratiate himself with the trade papers by passing on useful information—such as the date of a preview. Before presenting a picture for criticism, studios will pull a sneak preview in some outlying district, in order to use the audience reaction in cutting and improving the picture. Naturally, all preparations for sneak previews are shrouded in secrecy. Somehow the trade papers manage to catch them. Anybody who tips them off to a preview gets nice treatment. Even if the picture is panned, the boy who gave the tip is spared. It is an easy way out, if you are afraid your picture is no good and that you will share in the general lambasting. It makes for a great esprit-de-corpse.

At one time the trade papers were openly recognized as a nuisance by one of the major studios whom we shall call for the moment, Paramount (because that is what it is laughingly called by the exhibitors who add, "If It's a Paramount Picture, It's Your Own Fault"). To abate the nuisance, the studio made a blanket ruling against all visitors. If you had business with anyone in the studio, you were announced and okayed. The writers who beefed because of the inconvenience

to their wives and to friends who dropped in for a game of Hearts, were told it was for their own good. The writers finally saw it that way. Undesirable people did pop in at undesirable moments.

It was tough on the advertising, automobile, insurance, perfume-bootlegging and book-pirating fraternity. Instead of being able to catch their prey with his back hair down, they had to seive their way through an impervious uniform at the information desk.

Life was pretty pleasant for a while. All you had to do was issue instructions to your secretary—enter the studio by climbing the back fence so they couldn't waylay you at the main gate—eat your lunch in the gents' room, and get a new, unlisted phone number at home. But one day a wondering and irritated writing staff looked up to see a gentleman named Archie crawling out from behind the woodwork. He wanted to explain about the Big Superspecial Paramount number. He had the Paramount ad—he had the Head-of-Paramount's ad—and all the supervisors'. He hinted that failure to support the Paramount number would be considered by the studio as a distinct lack of cooperation. Nobody knows what form of coercion the paper used on the studio head. But it was good enough to make him break his own iron-clad rule and lay the place wide open to the pest. Archie took that studio like Grant took Epsom. The other papers were furious. The writers were furious, too. And you know what they did? You guessed it—they beefed. And contributed generously to the Special Paramount number. . . .

But nowadays Ungar, former leader of the paper banditti, has grown fat and sits at home nursing his pet hates—Louis B. Mayer, his rival, Quigley, and above all his more successful young disciple, Billy Wilkerson, of The Hollywood Reporter. Wilkerson is Hollywood's acknowledged Public Enemy No. 1. He adopted the prevailing technique, but added a few rosettes of his own. Billy used to promote cemetery lots back in Buffalo—a modest enough Grade Z racket. Then he ran a night club in New York. But he grew tired of bowing the suckers in and out. He decided to change his bow for a slug.

Arrived in Hollywood, he confided to a close friend, "This town is a racket. I'm going to play it like a racket—get mine as fast as I can—and duck." He hasn't ducked yet—but he's been doing all right by the rest of his statements.

The Reporter started as a democratic little paper—all on the side of "The creative genius and the creative and artistic brains in back of the motion picture industry." It used the tried and true fas-

(Continued on page 32)

# Mr. Capra Goes to Town

BY ROBERT STEBBINS

In the event that no one has mentioned it before, let us state, without fear of contradiction from our colleagues, that reviewing movies is a very dull business. There are few surprises. By the time you've read the advance production notes, the commercial publicity and the preview notices you know just what you're getting. Besides, to make it easier, a good quarter of the stories have already been produced as old silents and early talkies. But nothing we had read in advance prepared us for the amazing qualities of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*. According to all the rules, Frank Capra, director, and Robert Riskin, screen author, could only have been expected to go on turning out dilute imitations of their 1934 Academy winner, *It Happened One Night*. Their *Broadway Bill*, a pallid assemblage of whimsies about horses and followers of the sport, pointed the way to such a prediction.

For that matter, *It Happened One Night*, stripped of its pace and interest of incident, was a pretty indefensible affair. The film was based on a notion dear to the hearts of a people reared in the school of wish-fulfillment—that if you stepped up to a grumpy plutocrat, who, of course, had a heart of gold despite it all, bawled him out, told him his daughter was a spoiled brat, he'd at once grow enamored of you and you'd come into his millions. Produced in the fifth year of the crisis, *It Happened One Night* took place in a social and economic vacuum. People behaved lovably and for the most part went through recognizable actions but the realities of 1934 were barred from the lot and integrity checked at the gate.

Now along comes *Mr. Deeds* to astound with its unexpected warmth and indubitable sincerity of purpose. The whimsies are still here, the wit of line and action still crackles as in few other films, but underlying all is the salutary implication, if not recognition, that the world is a place of sorrows where the great multitudes of men suffer for the excesses of the few.

As the story begins a Mr. Longfellow Deeds (Gary Cooper) comes into a fortune of twenty million dollars left him by an eccentric uncle who dies in an auto crash in Italy. Deeds, a young post-card poet, tuba player in the village band and voluntary captain of the fire-squad, reluctantly leaves the only life he knows and goes to the big town to shepherd his fortune. At once his name is front-page

news. Babe Bennet (Jean Arthur), star reporter on the *Gazette*, is put on the job of splitting Deeds wide open. She succeeds by palming herself off as a poor out-of-town steno looking for work. By dint of deliberately turning everything he does or says to ridicule she makes him the most derided man of the hour, but in the process she falls for him and vice-versa. On the day Deeds is to propose marriage to Bennet, he's tipped off to her true identity. Thoroughly disheartened and sickened by the savagery of the big city, he prepares to leave for his home town — "Mandrake Falls, where the scenery enthalls, where no hardship e'er befalls, welcome to Mandrake Falls."

Up to this point in the narrative we've a brilliant, though characteristic, Boy meets Girl—Boy loses Girl situation, with Boy gets Girl not far in the offing. Then something unanticipated happens. As Deeds is about to descend the huge marble staircase of his Drive mansion he hears a commotion down below and sees a shabbily-dressed stranger struggling to get into the house. Deeds comes down and asks what he wants. The stranger, a dispossessed farmer, breaks out into tirade against Deeds for sitting on his millions and not reaching out a hand or penny for the relief of human suffering. Deeds, who has been betrayed by everyone in town, thinks he's in the presence of a new racket.

To quote from the script:

Deeds: "A farmer, eh? You're a moocher, that's what you are. I wouldn't believe you or anybody else on a stack of Bibles. You're a moocher like all the rest of them around here, so get out."

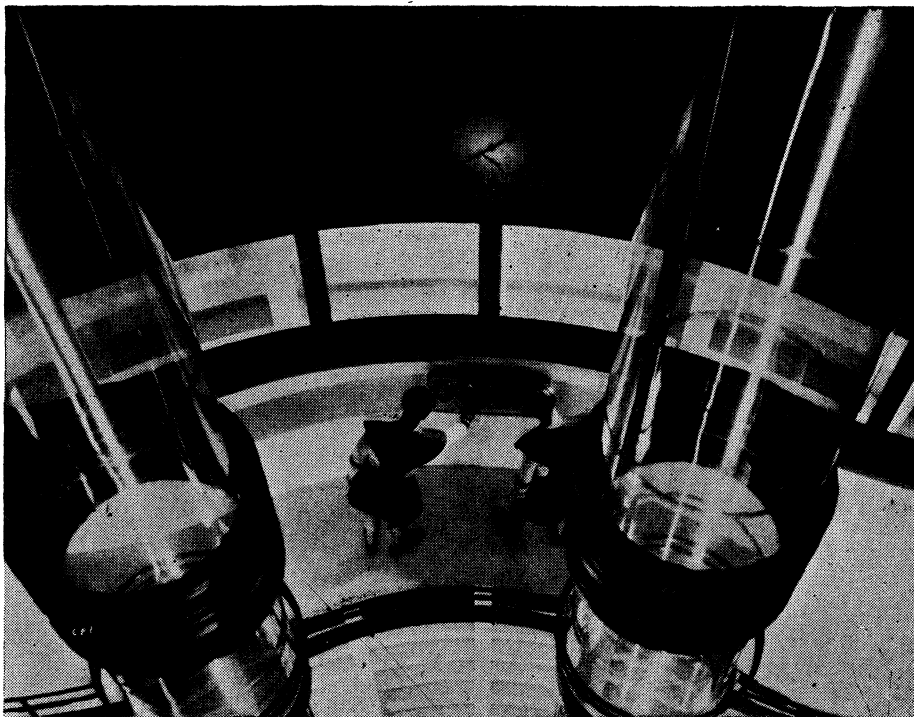
Farmer: "Sure. E v e r y b o d y ' s a moocher to you. A mongrel dog eating out of a garbage pail is a moocher to you."

Suddenly the farmer pulls a gun on him.

Farmer: "You are about to get some more publicity, Mr. Deeds. You're about to get on the front page again. See how you're going to like it this time. See what good your money's going to do when you're six feet under ground."

At this stage, according to all the sanctified rules laid down by years of custom, Jean Arthur should have rushed in, kicked the gun up, and gotten prettily pinked in the process. Then, after the maniacal worker, now frothing at the mouth, is led away by the police, the film should have faded out in a clinical clinch. But Arthur somehow doesn't appear. Instead, the farmer continues.

Farmer: "You never thought of that, did you? No. All you ever thought of was pitching pennies. You money-grabbing hick. You never gave a thought to all those starving people standing in the bread lines, not knowing where their next meal was coming from; not able to



STILL FROM H. G. WELLS' "THINGS TO COME"



STILL FROM H. G. WELLS' "THINGS TO COME"



feed their wife and kids; not able to. . . ."

He is unable to go on. Drops his gun, falls into a chair, weeping.

Farmer: "Oh, oh I'm glad I didn't hurt anybody. Excuse me. Crazy. You get all kinds of crazy ideas. Sorry, didn't know what I was doing. Losing your farm after twenty years' work, seeing your kids go hungry, a game little wife saying everything's going to be all right. Standing there in the bread lines. Killed me to take a hand-out. I ain't used to it. Go ahead and do what you want, mister. I guess I'm at the end of my rope. . . ."

Deeds sits down to eat with him and the scene is at an end.

Here we have not only a magnificently conceived and acted sequence (the part of the farmer is played by John Wray), but even something more significant—for the first time in the movies we have been given a sympathetic, credible portrait of a worker, speaking the language of workers, saying the things workers all over the country say. How far removed this is from the beery, rapacious radical of *Little Man, What Now?* the feeble-minded ego-maniacs played by Paul Muni and Spencer Tracy in *Black Pit* and *Riff-Raff*, the howling foreman of *Men of Iron!*

Deeds decides to spend his entire fortune on farm lands for the unemployed. For his pains, he is taken into custody as insane. The trial scene during which Deeds establishes his sanity, gets the girl and the farmers their land, is probably the most brilliant piece of screen writing to come out of Hollywood.

Now, the captious will undoubtedly point out that *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* is as flagrant a flaunting of reality as its predecessor, *It Happened One Night*.



JORIS IVENS

F. Sachnoff

"Certainly Mr. Capra and Riskin don't think the world can be pulled up from the mire that way. In the long run pictures like Mr. Capra's only serve to dull the militance of labor. Pure wish-fulfillment all over again." To which we can only reply by pointing out the difference between wish-fulfillment based on a sincere and understanding awareness of the world's ills and the pure soothing syrup that constitutes the staple export of Hollywood. For Hollywood, *Mr. Deeds* is a tremendous advance.

After commending the work of the cast, Gary Cooper, Jean Arthur, Lionel Stander, Walter Catlett, the greatest share of praise must be Capra's and Riskin's. If Mr. Capra could trick us once more and in some unaccountable way avoid the chauvinist, jingo pitfalls of his next picture, *Lost Horizons*—which places Ronald Colman among Chinese "bandits"—our pleasure in *Mr. Deeds* would be quite complete.

### Film Checklist

**RAIN—INDUSTRIAL SYMPHONY—BORINAGE—NEW EARTH:** Joris Ivens' extraordinarily sensitive essays in the documentary form. Starting with *Rain*, an avantgarde film, which in America finds a counterpart in the early work of Ralph Steiner and Radiekevich, Joris Ivens steadily advanced to the mature cine-social statements of *Borinage* and *New Earth*. In our wayward opinion, Mr. Ivens has not completely solved the problem of sustaining interest—though in all fairness to the talented Dutch director we must point out that *Borinage* and *New Earth* were robbed of effective footage by New York's ferociously ignorant Board of Censors. Even in their mutilated form, however, they frequently achieve utterance of great power and furnish undeniable evidence of Ivens' ability to present the exact sense values of photographed reality. *Borinage*, for example, offers the truest rendition of poverty we have ever seen, with the exception of the slum interiors in Chaplin's *Easy Street*. Ivens is undoubtedly a new voice in films, a voice that deserves an audience.

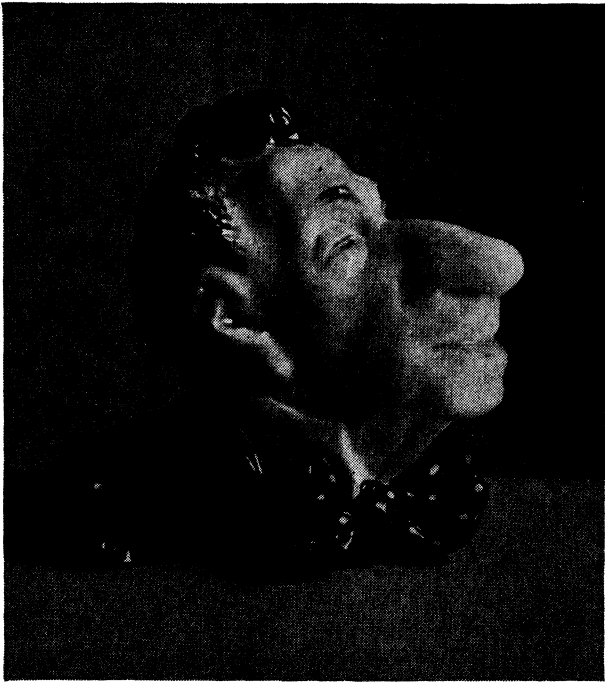
**THINGS TO COME:** (London Film, directed by William Cameron Menzies, story by H. G. Wells.) Two hours of papier mache models and that goes for the actors. Here we have an anti-war preachment in which the deterioration of the world is indicated by a series of mossy dates, 1941, 52, 55, etc., gradually enlarging and coming into focus on the screen. The terrors of war are depicted in so stylized and abstract a manner that little horror is aroused. The argument is so confused, or rather attenu-

ated, for by Mr. Wells' own admission, "a film is no place for argument," that Sir Philip Sassoon, Under Secretary of the British Air Forces, was able to use the movie to bolster his plea before Parliament for increased armaments. After the world has been reduced to ruins, a handful of scientist aeronauts establish a technocratic dictatorship over the world. They and their descendants keep the people happy. There is not the slightest indication of the democratic participation of the people in government. The philosophy of state as expressed by the dictator, Cabal, is practically identical with certain tenets of the fascist system. "The best of life lies nearest to death. . . . There is nothing wrong in suffering, if you suffer for a purpose. Our revolution did not abolish death or danger. It simply made death and danger worth while." Toward the end of the film there is a great to-do about a space gun that shoots rockets to the moon with a view to populating it. It's all a symbol of life ever reaching out to new worlds, though needless to say, a perfectly untenable symbol in terms of modern science. We're afraid Mr. Korda, the producer, might have spared himself the trouble and expense. Two million dollars was too great an outlay to prove that Mr. Wells was in his mental eclipse.

**THE GREAT ZIEGFELD:** A good translation of what Ziegfeld stood for in entertainment—statuesque womanhood with the usual crustacean headpieces, expensive ensembles, horses, dogs, elephants, miracles of carpentry and good comics (six minutes of Ray Bolger and Fannie Brice almost compensate for the dull stretches). For one who never considered the *Follies* an indispensable experience it's hard to know what the shooting's about. We'd like to be told. Ziegfeld's screen biography is so obviously at variance with the higgling realities of the show-business that it is difficult to grant it any credibility.

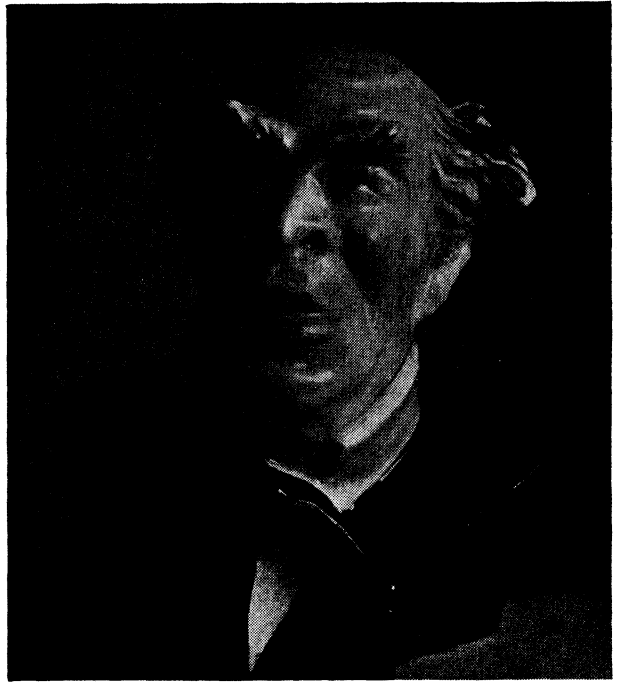
**THE SINGING FOOL:** A good semi-musical in which the burden of entertainment has been wisely shifted from the aging shoulders of Al Jolson to Allen Jenkins, the Yacht Club Boys, Cab Calloway and his band, Edward Everett Horton and the talented child, Sybil Jason. Not that Al is completely negligible. He still sings with the same indifference to pitch and quality that won him the epithet the "golden-voiced Jolson". In fact, he's more out of tune than ever, so there ought to be no complaints. But singing aside, he manages to be really amusing in the picture's best number. Mr. Jolson wants to sing a Mammy song. There are objections from the Yacht Club Boys.

(Continued on page 35)



MEYERHOLD

Kukriniksi



STANISLAVSKY

Kukriniksi

## "Moscow Rehearsals" : A Review

BY LEE STRASBERG

There is one fundamental element which is lacking in all books describing the Russian theatre. They are written more "with the ears than with the eyes." They find it "amazing," "interesting" or "perplexing"—but we very rarely discern what it was they saw and experienced in the theatre itself. *Moscow Rehearsals*, by Norris Houghton, possesses this quality. No other that I know of succeeds so well in depicting what one perceives and experiences in a Russian theatre. It is fresh, invigorating, and instructive. For Mr. Houghton went not only to see but to learn—and did. He takes us with him on this voyage of exploration, not only backstage but through the stages of rehearsals, the theatrical schools, the homes of the artists and the conditions under which they live and work.

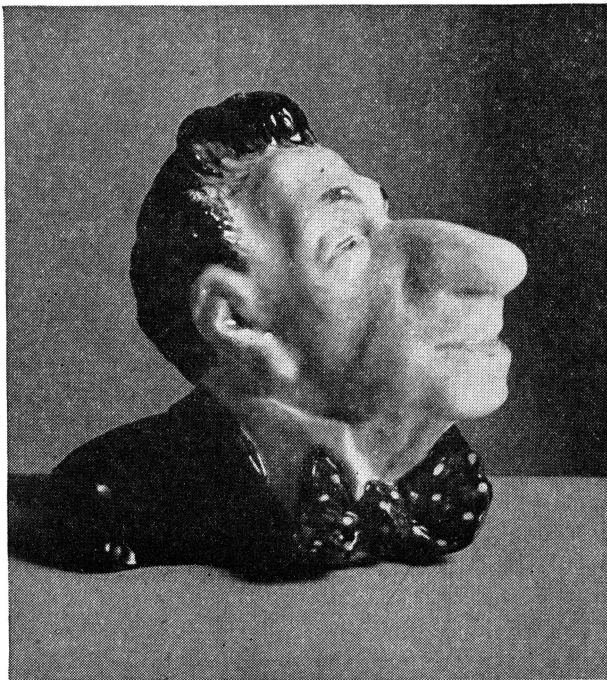
Descriptions of this sort have a value over and above the one they consciously set themselves. Twenty-odd years ago there rose before us in America the vision of a new theatre in which the actor would develop to new heights of mastery, in which the director would assume a new significance raising the theatre to interpretative heights quite undreamt of, in which the scenic designer would create new miracles of atmosphere and space, all of which would finally lead to a new drama. The words of Gordon Craig nourished these dreams. As time went

on and some of our scene designers created such published but unproduced projects as Robert Edmond Jones' sketches for Shelley's *The Cenci* and Norman Bel Geddes' scheme for *The Divine Comedy*, it began to be rumored that perhaps they were a little ahead of the other craftsmen in the theatre—who would it was hoped be stimulated and soon catch up. Most of these visions are now forgotten even by their creators. It is now more stylish to smile condescendingly at the mention of Gordon Craig and murmur something about "those impractical visionaries." The theatre has undoubtedly developed. Directors have become more facile and more fluent, especially in stage managing the pace of a show. Scene designers have perfected their craft in the use of color and light. Actors have learned the ideal of ensemble. But the vision of the theatre has remained fundamentally unchanged. It remains the same black and white two dimensional process it was. It is good for all of us—those of us youngsters who grew up on these dreams and are beginning to waver in our faith in them, and those "masters" who contributed no little to them but have slowly accustomed themselves to working under "what is possible under present conditions"—to be reminded and admonished that those were not hallucinations, that such a three dimensional theatre is possible, that in fact

it exists—in Russia—a theatre which can bring words of praise even from Gordon Craig.

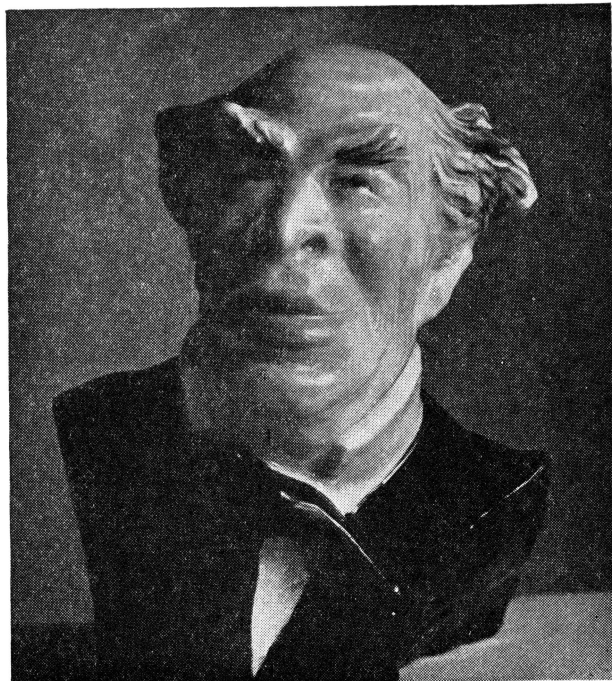
Throughout Mr. Houghton's book one feels constantly the sense of being introduced to a theatre which is not simply different but of a completely new kind. Obviously the first question which arises is "How was this accomplished?" That is what the author wanted to find and what he describes for us remarkably clearly and succinctly, not through any theory of his own but by a narrative of the creative and organizational processes of a few of the outstanding theatres, well chosen for this purpose. The Stanislavsky method, Meyerhold's bio-mechanics, the Vakhtangov theatre, the "realism" of Okhlopkov's young theatre are summarized for us in the words of their spokesmen and through observation at rehearsal. Every one interested in the theatre, whether layman or professional, will find this book of great value. The theatre worker will find here a wealth of detail unobtainable in any book of like compass in any language.

Mr. Houghton's method, however, has a dangerous weakness which leads to confusion. It leads us to think of this activity as different technical systems which lead to varying formal results. It tends to stress the purely formal aspect: "movement" in the Meyerhold theatre; the slightly exaggerated characterization



MEYERHOLD

*Kukriniksi*



STANISLAVSKY

*Kukriniksi*

and brilliant color of the Vakhtangov; the unusual methods of production in Okhlopkov's presentations. It is good description but the theatrical analysis and criticism is weak. For the question rises—what causes this diversity of approach and training, why *do* Stanislavsky and Meyerhold differ? Is it a matter of artistic temperament? When the same play is produced in a number of theatres, is the difference simply a stylistic one? What does it all lead to? Simply good theatre? Of what good is it? Simply that it is more interesting? Despite the obvious enthusiasm of the reportage there is no complete understanding. The reader is left highly stimulated but in a state of confusion somewhat reflected by the author himself in his final chapter, "Whither America"? There is not sufficient clarity as to the whys and wherefores of any of the technical processes described and the aim they achieve, except that in a general way they aid "creative" work. Because of the emphasis on details of procedure instead of on the fundamental artistic vision and search for the truth which generates it, one often has the impression that we do things at least as well here in America and without half as much fuss. What in the wide world do we need a Stanislavsky system for? It takes too much time and besides we have just as good actors here without it. "Movement" is the "challenging thing" in Meyerhold's theatre, and Mr. Houghton describes how this movement is created. But to what purpose? What is gained thereby that cannot be accomplished by other means? If we don't like Meyerhold's "movements," of what value is the description of how it is attained? To these queries there is no answer and there can be none until we are given some fundamental understanding of the *reason* and *necessity* for all this activity and the fundamentally different aims they strive for.

"The Stanislavsky system" — Mr. Houghton correctly writes—"is really only a conscious codification of ideas about acting which have always been the property of most good actors of all countries whether they knew it or not." Quite true. But it is much more. For outside of the "technical means for the creation of the creative mood," it is the *only* method whereby the actor can at the present time systematically explore the *content* of his rôle, and the *meaning* of the play. It is the only way that at the present time the actor can become more than a mimic, and assume the part of a creative collaborator. The Stanislavsky system gives the actor means whereby he becomes an interpreter of the meaning of the play. In fact the keynote to all search for acting systems and modern theatrical

forms is in this very word—"interpretation." Modern theatrical art aims to find and elucidate the meaning of a play. The "line of the intuition of feelings" found by Stanislavsky in the Chekov plays was of value not simply to the actor but succeeded in unveiling the real meaning of Chekov, and included technical processes whereby this meaning could be "acted out" to the audience. We are so accustomed at the present time to what Chekov means that we forget that it was the technique of the Moscow Art Theatre actors which made these ideas the common property of the world.

The same is true of Meyerhold—who has remained an enigma because the very brilliance of his methods obscures the significant content. But the reason for his breaking the play up into episodes, for improvising new scenes, for the particular kind of movement Meyerhold prefers, fundamentally derives from *content*, from Meyerhold's interpretation of a play. Meyerhold's influence is much more than "the influence of his style." And if "he presumably has never found the perfect form" it may be that he was never looking for it. Though he has for a long time had a definite method of training, his style has changed with each play—for each play has a different content.

Now it must not be thought that Mr. Houghton has completely neglected this phase. He writes that Meyerhold "ponders long over the thought of the author. He tries to penetrate the playwright's meaning," etc. But we never discern, nor are we ever shown, how the new content that Meyerhold finds makes inevitable any new forms. In both *Woe From Wisdom*, *The Inspector General*, and, one might add, *The Storm*, Meyerhold, to use Mr. Houghton's words, "lifted the old Russia to heights of ridicule and absurdity and hurled it with cruel and bitter force upon the rocks of his poetic and social disillusionment," and though these productions all are different in style, the formal aspect is directly related to the *specific* content of each of them. In his brilliant speech at the beginning of rehearsals of *The Inspector General*, Meyerhold revealed to his actors and collaborators how as a result of his analysis of the play the specific form of the stage took shape, why the Inspector General will appear under a different guise in various scenes, why he feels that the play is not the simple farce it seems to be, but is imbued with tragic overtones. From this grew the style of the production—a mixture of comedy and tragedy heightened to the "grotesque." *Camille* has been textually less changed than some of the former plays, but where, as in the second scene, Meyerhold im-

provides a complete new scene on the basis of a few words in the text, it is in order to create before the spectator the social background he must be aware of to properly appreciate the individual conflict. And in what a marvelous fashion does Meyerhold set up this "montage"—snatches of poetry, romanticism, licentiousness, with a touch of the music hall and the final touch of the death masquerade foreshadowing the ultimate doom of that society.

Without an understanding of the fundamental *significance* of this activity, we are unable to recognize it as anything but playing with formal patterns.

Once this principle of the inevitable sequence of content and form is recognized, many things fall into place. The reason more time is used in rehearsal than on Broadway is not that the Russian is a "perfectionist" and possesses a different "attitude towards workmanship." I have heard the call "once more" much more often on Broadway than in Russia. But the "once more" here usually alludes to an exit or entrance, to a piece of business, to running thru the scene to gain smoothness and precision, whereas in Russia it concerns the central core of a scene, some fundamental motivation either in the character, or the scene or the play.

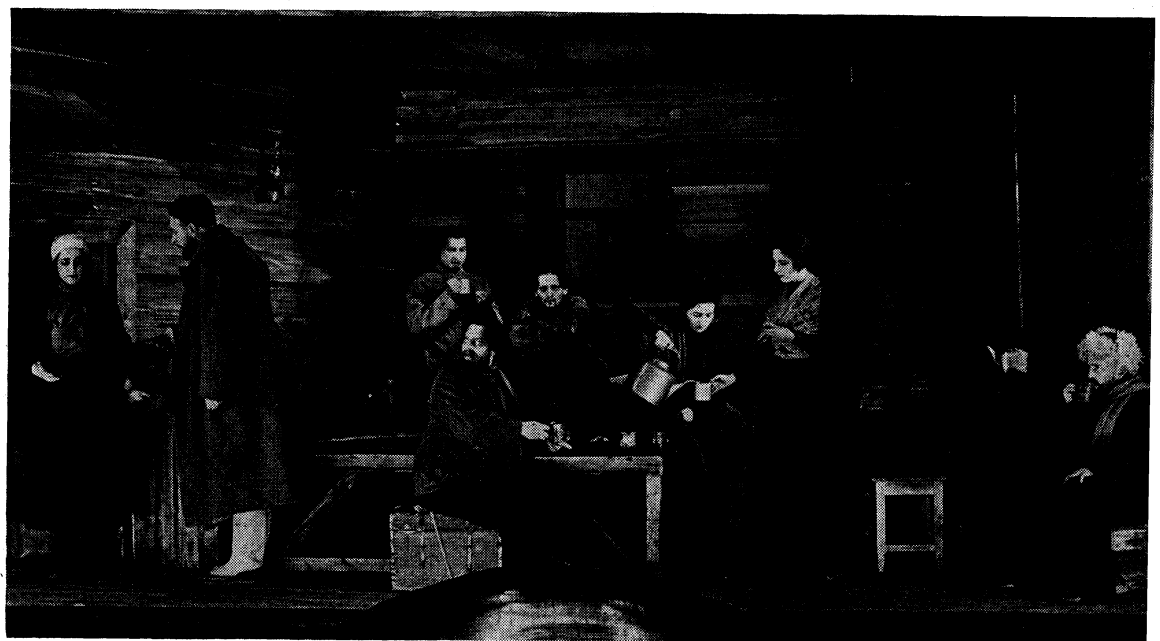
The difference between a Russian and an American production is not a difference in talent or ability, smoothness, facility, but one in "kind"—the difference between a "show" and a "play"! (That is what Stanislavsky meant when, upon being asked to direct a play in America, he is said to have remarked, "I'll either take two years or two weeks.") I doubt whether it is possible to convey to a reader exactly what this difference consists in. Seeing the same play done by two different theatres was in my own experience the most thrilling and enlightening theatrical experience of my life. For here was not the same play in two different styles. The style was almost the same. Both companies were expert and talented. The words uttered were the same. No new characters or scenes were introduced—and yet here before me were two completely different plays. The careful reader will find many clues to this emphasis in Mr. Houghton's own narrative. Meyerhold says, "Two things are essential for a play's production, as I have often told you. First, we must find the thought of the author; then we must reveal that thought in a theatrical form" (p. 100). The first points in the registrar's report in the Vakhtangov theatre deal with: "1. Theme of the play. 2. Chief ideas in the subject. 3. Social meaning.

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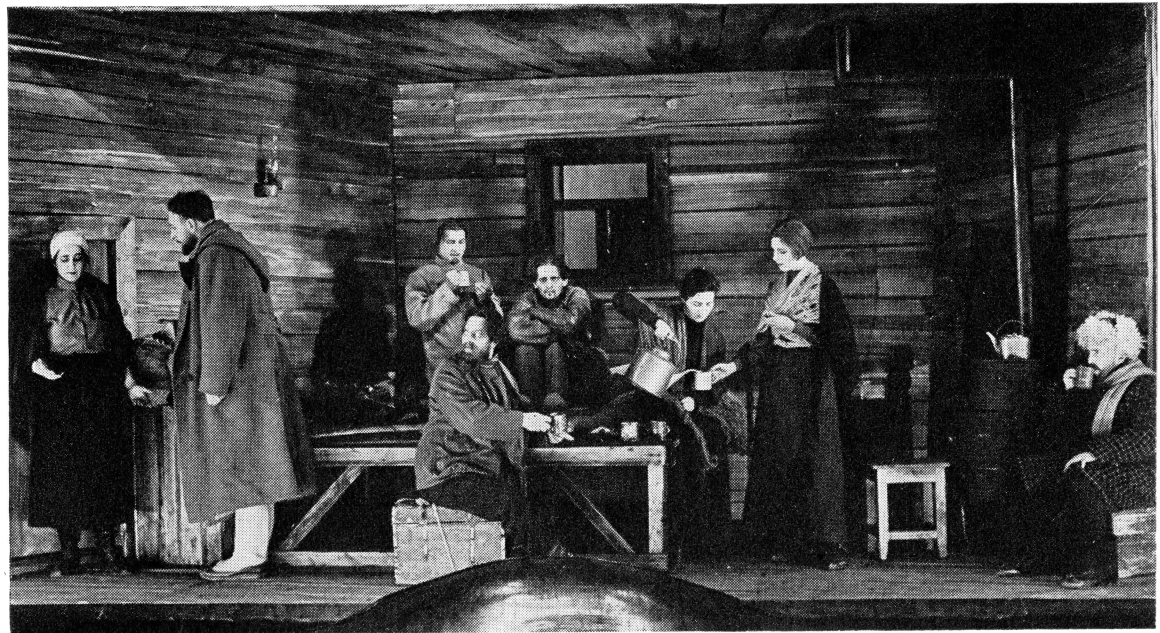
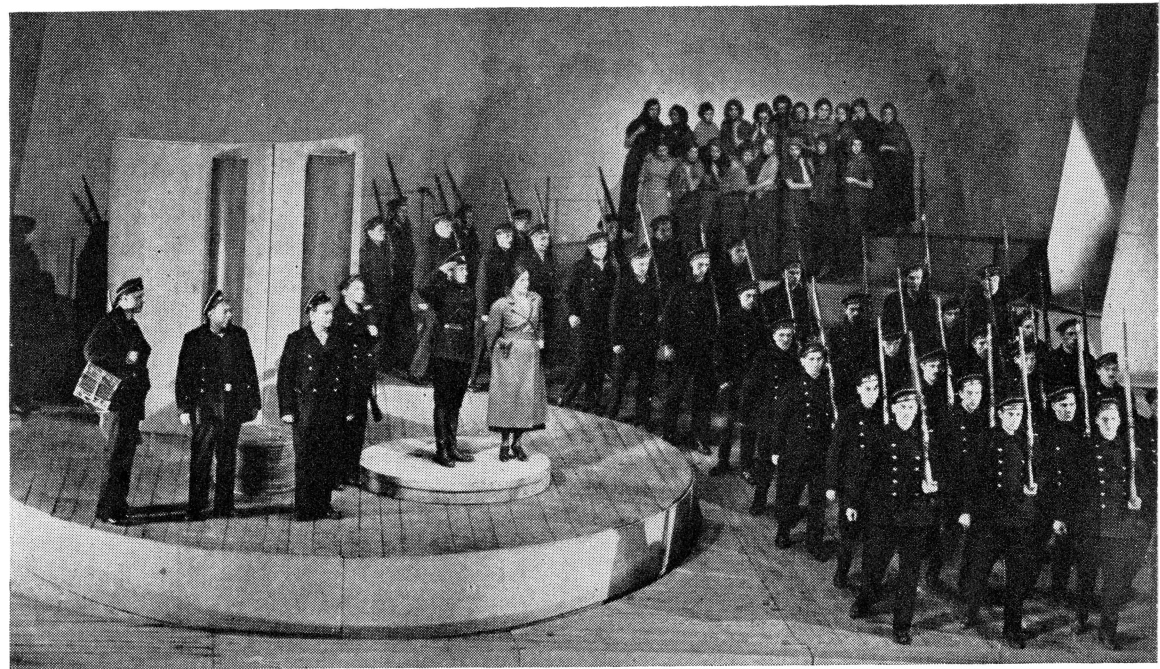
# Soviet Theatre Festival

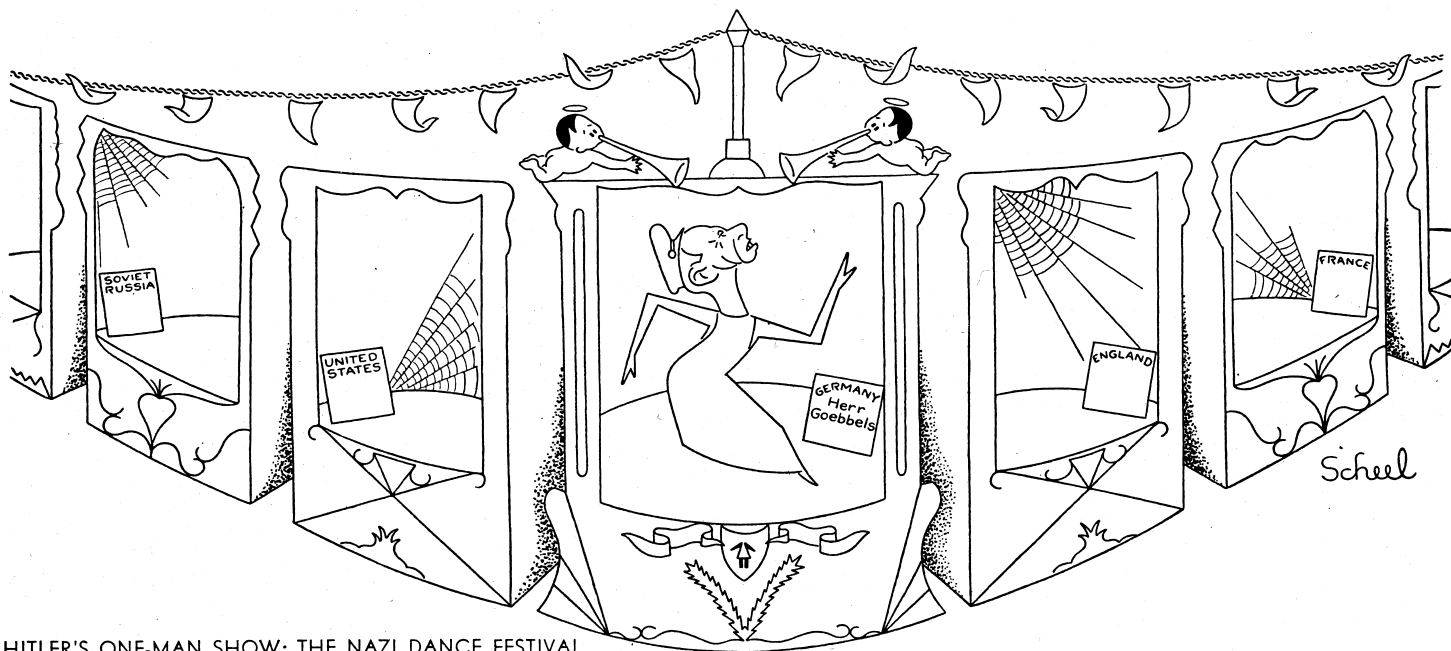
The Fourth Annual Soviet Theatre Festival, which will take place September 1-10th in Moscow and Leningrad, will present a panorama of what is generally conceded to be the leading theatre in the world. The dozen productions given in the ten days run the entire gamut of the Soviet theatre, embracing classical and revolutionary styles and plays and including the best of the old and new theatre and opera organizations. The modern theatre will be represented by three of its outstanding exponents—the Meyerhold in a production of Griboyedov's classical satire, *Woe to the Wise*; the Vakhtangov in *Aristocrats* by Pogodin, and the Theatre of the Revolution in a new play, *Umka The White Bear* by Selvinsky, depicting the impact of Soviet ideas on a group of primitive Arctic natives. The Moscow Art Theatre will offer a dramatization of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. *Eugenie Onegin* will be presented at the Bolshoi (Grand) Opera; a new opera *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Dzerzhinsky, taken from Sholokhov's novel, will be given at the Leningrad Maly Opera; and a ballet, *The Fountain of Bakhchissarai*, by the young composer Asafiev, will be shown at the State Opera and Ballet (formerly Marinsky) Theatre in Leningrad. The last-named is based on Pushkin's colorful and exotic tale of ancient Crimea.

An innovation in this year's Festival will be a performance at the newly created Theatre of Folk Art of mass amateur art by prize winning groups of workers and collective farmers. Some of the best of the famous children's theatres in both Moscow and Leningrad will present their outstanding productions. Important examples of the theatre art of the minor nationalities, which has recorded an amazing development under the Soviet regime, will be given in performances by the State Georgian Theatre of Tiflis and the Ukraine State Theatre from Kiev.



● SOVIET THEATRE PRODUCTIONS: TOP: "UMKA, THE WHITE BEAR" (MOSCOW THEATRE OF THE REVOLUTION). CENTER: "OPTIMISTIC TRAGEDY" (KAMERNY THEATRE). BELOW: "RESURRECTION" (MOSCOW ART THEATRE).





HITLER'S ONE-MAN SHOW: THE NAZI DANCE FESTIVAL

## Danse Macabre

BY EMANUEL EISENBERG

**D**ancers of America, Nazi Germany wants you, wants you very badly indeed. For a strictly cultural event called the International Dance Festival is scheduled to take place at the Theater-am-Horst-Wessel-Platz in Berlin from the 19th to the 31st of July—and it would be pretty disgraceful if no prominent American dancers were represented. The event is so strictly cultural, so utterly divorced from politics or the Olympics (as some hot-heads have been mean enough to suggest), that “a selection of the dance creations will be shown in the art program of the Olympic games during the first week of August in the Dome Hall of the House of German Sport at the Reich Sports Field.” Surely you will come.

And surely this is not the first time you have been asked.

Maybe you were asked by the Hamburg-American Line, a German steamship company which hasn't been doing so well recently because of a general distressing tendency on the part of Americans to withhold patronage from all Nazi businesses. The line has been unnaturally busy making what they consider dazzlingly reasonable offers to potential dancer-tourists.

Or maybe you received an invitation from Virginia Stewart, the American business representative of the Mary Wigman Central School of the Dance in Dresden? This communicative lady, from her headquarters at 1400 South Santa Anita Drive in Arcadia, California, will send anyone at all a nice long chatty letter at

the drop of a swastika. Miss Stewart says, “There are no racial restrictions involved as far as I know,” but perhaps she simply doesn't get around much. In all of her solicitations it is notorious that this pseudo-cultural travel agent, who gets a definite rake-off from the Hamburg-American Line for every tour she supposedly encourages for sheer love of the living dance, has never approached any Jewish or Negro performer. “Please realize that the dance still lives in Germany much as it has lived and developed during the past 20 years,” Virginia Stewart urges; and I am embarrassed to remind this messianic representative of Nazi Germany of a little item out of Storm-Troop Leader Bruno Malitz's booklet put into circulation by her fatherland's own ministry of culture and propaganda:

“One of the best physical exercises is the dance. Originally a religious ceremony, the dance took deep hold of the national character. Each tribe, each nation developed its own dances. Then liberalism with its shallow people and dried-up national characters set in, until today we have only a few national dances. But today, true to the international thinking of liberalism, we have the universal dance of all nations. If the steps in the nigger dance were too extreme, they were modified. After the war, the dance was being tremendously pushed forward as the ‘expression of the soul.’ A large number of dancing schools were opened and made popular in connection with

gymnastics. The German dance disappeared—but dance systems developed. Dances full of erotic, inciting movements which breathed nothing of the German soul. Jewish instinct scented good business and very cleverly contrived to make money out of the dance and gymnastics. The Jew Laban\* preached the modern artistic dance with all its extreme erotic and therefore anti-racial-dance form. Furthermore, interested parties carried into Germany the alien dance-systems of the French-Swiss German-baiter, Dalcroze, of the Swede, Bess Mensendieck, who is at present living in the United States. Just think of the Loheland system, of the American Duncan sisters, of the Russian dancer Anna Pavlova, and then ask, ‘What is still German?’”

This magazine will be glad to open its pages to Miss Stewart for an explanation of what is left in Germany of the dance “as it has lived and developed during the last 20 years.”

But maybe your invitation came from Lois Ellfeldt at 1867 Crawford Road in Cleveland, Ohio? Miss Ellfeldt is distributing a neat circular describing courses to be given in English at the Mary Wigman Central Institute in Berlin from July 3rd to 30th. The circular appears strictly informative; no persuasion attends it. But in the same envelope you receive a copy of the special itinerary in the 55-day tour arranged for Miss Lois Ellfeldt and party. It begins in the late

\*Zeal seems to get the Nazis a little confused every so often. Von Laban, far from being a Jew, is head of the Tanzbuehne and leading spirit of the Festival.

evening of June 20th, and for several days you are conducted through such disarming spots as London, Brussels, Paris and Cologne. All movements through these parts are described in detail. But the period from July 3rd, the day you go to Berlin, to August 8th, when you embark for home on the Europa or the Bremen, is left completely blank. Why? Is it because the tour has been primarily arranged for those who have been organized into taking courses at the Nazified Wigman school, into attending the shamelessly phony International Dance Festival, into seeing the "winners" of the Festival perform at the Olympics during the first week of August? Remarkably enough, the entire pilgrimage was graciously conceived and worked out by the omnipresent Hamburg-American Line in Cleveland. And Miss Ellfeldt is a complete sucker for what they tell her. "Dance history is being *made* there [in Germany] this year," she gushed in a letter to a friend. This recorder is willing to bet that the deluded lady really thinks so.

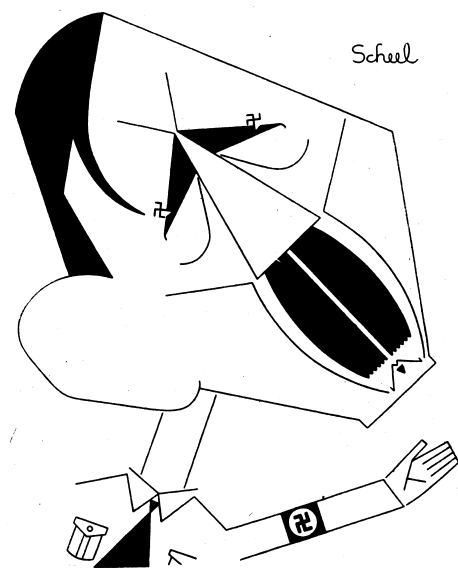
But it is altogether likely that you are nothing less than esthetically flint-hearted and politically oversuspicious and overzealous, so that you succumbed in no wise to the blandishments of Miss Stewart, Miss Ellfeldt and the hungry steamship company. Maybe you actually went to the point of turning them down. Then you are surely due for a visit from the delicate mousey lady called Mrs. Leo Ziemssen Moll.

Mrs. Moll is beyond all suspicion. A deliberate envoy from the German government? God forbid. She finds politics the dreariest subject in the world—and what would it have to do with the dance, anyway?—and she happens to be a sculptress and art-critic who visited America six years ago and got herself interviewed all over the place. That she arrived here this winter, shortly after it began to be realized that Virginia Stewart wasn't making half enough headway with her invitations; that she was making casual and disarming little journeys to the studios of just those important dancers who were known to be unfriendly to the Festival; that her lecture-demonstrations with slides concern themselves exclusively with the dancers who are still permitted to function in Germany (one such lecture having been given on April 10th at the Nazi Turnhalle in Yorkville under the auspices of the openly pro-Hitler and anti-Semitic Friends of New Germany, with the unbelievably Jew-baiting "American Bulletin"—"America for the Americans" or "Not Israel-America but Anglo-Germanic-America"—freely distributed at the entrance); that she is

planning to return to Germany in May, when she will be able to report how many well-known dancers can be expected in mid-July:—all this is of course a series of utterly unrelated details pointing to no general conclusions whatever.

Make no mistake about it: Mrs. Moll is no conscious Nazi agent, for she is too fantastically naive and has given the wrong answers in far too many instances. In fact, it is to be fervently hoped that she will not be cracked down upon for any of these answers when she gets back. No official in Germany ever told the lady to confide that the exemplarily chauvinistic Wigman schools might soon be closed for rampant immorality; to state that the German people, who suffered horribly during the war, had to choose fascism as a lesser evil; to announce that Kurt Jooss, who left Germany because he would not dismiss his Jewish composer-pianist, Fritz Cohen, is being permitted into the country again but only for the show-window period of the Festival (since there is always at least one Jew firmly on exhibit); or to blunder this way in the postscript of a letter to the writer: "It was said today that the Arierparagraph"—the section pertaining to Aryan monopoly on athletic genius—"has been canceled; that means that all German Jews may take up their job and work again. The foreign Jews were always free." Taking a brief excursion into the muddled margin, one finds an insert to go after the word "canceled": "During the Olympic year." One is grateful for Mrs. Moll's clarification that the cancelation applies only for the Olympic year. For the Olympic month, anyway. We'll see what we shall see after August.

But where was "it said today," Mrs. Moll? Was it said by anybody who



knew anything of the plight of the Jewish dancer who recently wrote to a friend in America? A copy of the letter is in the possession of this magazine. The letter says, in part: "I am still dancing and have my own dancing-school which goes tolerably; all depends that I am Jewish, and, as you will surely know, I am not any more permitted to get an engagement here in Germany for that reason, and have now only the permission to give lessons to Jewish pupils. Therefore you will understand that, under such circumstances, the time has come for me to look for a position in another country." Will anything be said about this at the farce of an International Dance Festival?

Mrs. Leo Ziemssen Moll seems to believe, and wants very much for you to believe that neither the German dance of today nor the specific projected Festival of July has anything to do with politics or propaganda. Martha Graham, America's most famous and most distinguished dancer, was in no way deceived, though approached by both Virginia Stewart and Mrs. Moll. This was her public statement after an invitation from the Dance Division of the German Ministry of Culture:

"I would find it impossible to dance in Germany at the present time. So many artists whom I respect and admire have been persecuted, have been deprived of the right to work for ridiculous and unsatisfactory reasons, that I should consider it impossible to identify myself, by accepting the invitation, with the regime that has made such things possible.

"In addition, some of my concert group would not be welcomed in Germany. I might be willing to try to persuade my group if I believed in the rightness of it myself. But under the circumstances I cannot even ask them, as I am entirely unsympathetic.

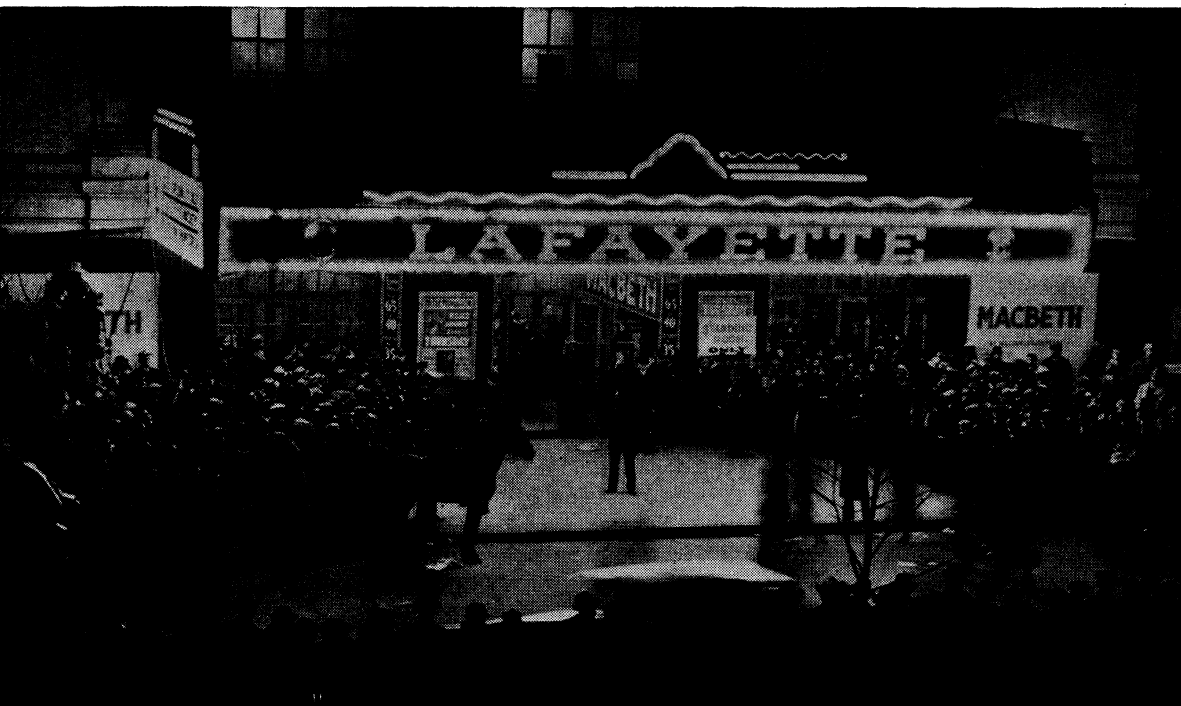
"I should like it plainly understood that, in refusing to visit Germany now, my action is directed only against the practices of the authorities. It does not reflect on German artists, for many of whom I have the greatest affection and respect, nor on the mass of the German people, who, I believe, are hostile to these persecutions."

And Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, two equally distinguished performers, sent this refusal to Virginia Stewart in her Arcadia hideaway:

"We have not received an official invitation to participate in the International Dance Festival in Berlin, and, if we had, we would not have accepted it. In the first place, we have in our group many

(Continued on page 37)





THE OPENING NIGHT OF "MACBETH"

Martin Harris

## The Negro Theatre "Macbeth"

BY ROI OTTLEY

In Harlem's opinion, the Federal Negro Theatre Project's production of *Macbeth*, at the Lafayette Theatre, was an eminent success. After years of playing distasteful stereotype and idiomatic roles in the American theatre, the Negro at last was attaining the status of an actor.

It is generally believed that the Negro is a "natural" in an idiom part. Broadway producers and directors have therefore felt that the Negro has no need of real direction or training. They only think of the Negro portraying Negro roles, but not an actor in the sense of interpreting universal emotions.

The Negro has become weary of carrying the white man's blackface burden in the theatre. In *Macbeth* he was given the opportunity to discard the bandana and burnt cork casting to play a universal character. Here, the Negro played a role not essentially Negro in text. Nor was his race designated by the dialogue of the play. From the point of view of the community, Harlem witnessed a production in which the Negro was not lampooned or made the brunt of laughter. He attended the *Macbeth* showing happy in the thought he wouldn't be again reminded, with all its vicious implications, that he was "a nigger."

While the play was not strictly Shakespeare's *Macbeth* because of its Haitian background and other minor changes, this proved unimportant to the audience, be-

cause of its broader implications. The play was definitely a break from the dialect part assigned to the Negro in the present inhibited American theatre.

The presence of Broadway and Park Avenue in the theatre on the night the play opened might have added to the glamour of the occasion, but such an audience could hardly be termed a particularly sympathetic observer for a play in which Negroes were not Stepin Fetchits or polygamous wenches. The Broadway reviewers, writing for this group, therefore journeyed to Harlem with the idea of seeing a mixture of Emperor Jones and Stepin Fetchit, with burlesque thrown in to season a palatable opinion many of their readers have of the Negro. This was best evidenced by their reviews the following morning.

Burns Mantle in the New York Daily News wrote, "It is a little as though O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* had re-established his kingdom in his South Sea Island." John Mason Brown, writing in the sometimes liberal New York Evening Post, thought, "... it should be a tale of Black Majesty and of murder and of fear besides which even *Emperor Jones* would seem tame."

Throughout the reviews the stereotype opinions of Negroes strongly stood out. Brooks Atkinson contributed a "classic" when he called the production "an idealization of Negro extravagance." But un-

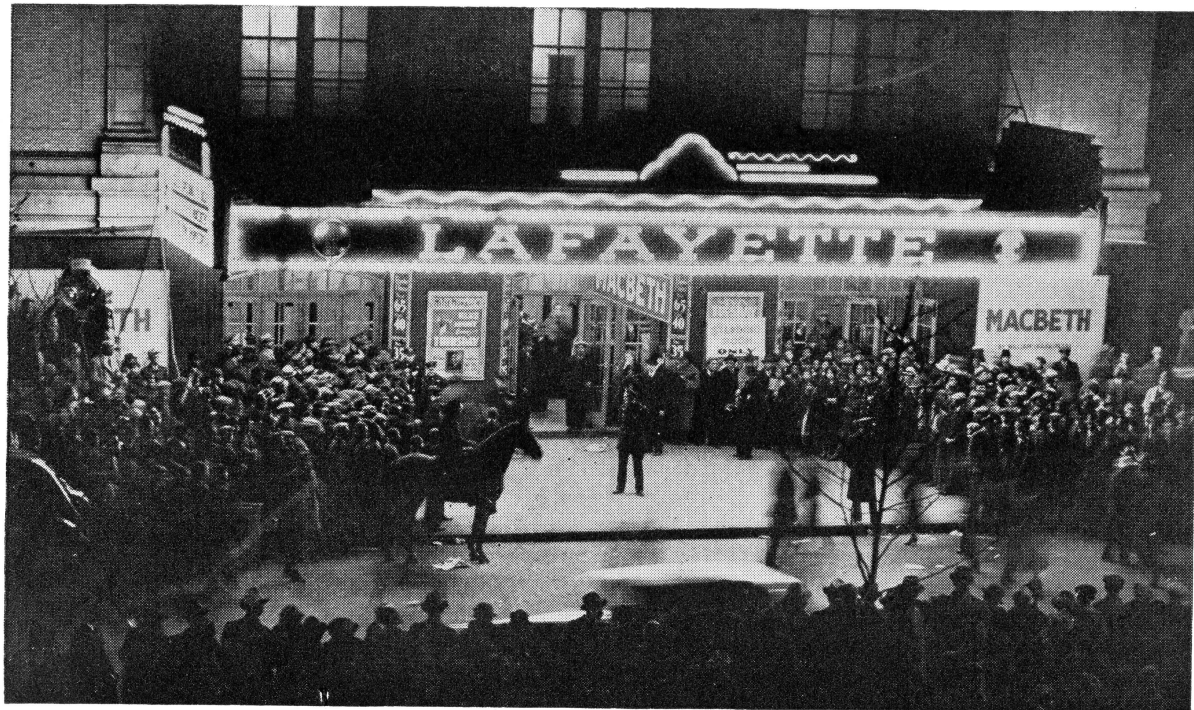
happily for Mr. Atkinson the "bizarre" costumes were conceived by Nat Karson, white. The re-arranging of the play was done by Orson Welles, the white director. Negroes merely played the roles and did the stage work which is always denied them in Broadway productions. Later in his piece Mr. Atkinson referred to the "ferocity of Negro acting" and how "... with an eye to animalism ... they turned the banquet scene into a ball."

Ignorant of what the production meant to Harlem, Burns Mantle reported that the "audience applauded because of its natural gaiety." Arthur Pollock adorned his piece with the statement "It (*Macbeth*) has a childlike austerity ... with all its gusto." And Percy Hammond, thinking in the same vein said, "They seemed to be afraid of the Bard, though they were playing him on their own home grounds." But Arthur Pollock reached the high point here, when he said, "They play Shakespeare as if they were apt children who had just discovered him and adored the old man."

None of these reviewers, however, applauded the fact that the Negro had discarded the bandana in the theatre and that a Negro Theatre was in the making. In line with the Herald-Tribune's anti-project policy, Percy Hammond concerned himself with the political aspects of the production. In his lead he took a slap at the government's subsidizing the project: "The Negro Theatre, an offshoot of the Federal government, gives an exhibition of de luxe boon-dogging ... being one of your Uncle Sam's experimental philanthropies." Grinding the political axe even finer he decried, in effect, the employment of workers on a theatre project. He said, "Washington spared no expense in making it (*Macbeth*) an ostentatious spectacle. The costumes and the scenery might cause an unendowed Broadway impresario to tremble at its apparent costliness."

Despite Arthur Pollock's implication that *Macbeth* was in the same class as a popular Harlem night club show, for Negroes to play *Macbeth* is a significant departure from a long line of stereotype and idiomatic roles in the American theatre. The result was a magnificent and spectacular production of a Haitian *Macbeth*, competently acted by a cast of 175 beautifully costumed players.

The title role was interpreted by Jack Carter, who will be remembered for his amazing characterization of the vital Lonnie in the Theatre Union's production of *Stevedore*, and again as Crown in the Theatre Guild's original production of *Porgy*. Edna Thomas played Lady Macbeth with skill, despite Percy Hammond's feeling that she was "daintily elegant."



THE OPENING NIGHT OF "MACBETH"

*Martin Harris*

# A Worker Looks at Broadway

BY JOHN MULLEN

In a little over a month, at the request of NEW THEATRE, I have seen eight plays. The general idea was this—that after seeing all these productions, I was to write my opinions of them from the standpoint of an average guy who knows nothing at all about the theatre, other than what he sees from the front-row balcony. I jumped at the chance of seeing a gang of plays all at one crack—because who doesn't like to go to the theatre? And considering that I had not seen more than a dozen shows in an entire lifetime previous to this occasion—I had more fun than a barrel of monkeys. True, this sudden onslaught of plays left me teetering around on my heels like a slug-nutty boxer for a while, but I finally recovered sufficiently to write my opinions.

The reader has gathered by this time that what I don't know about the theatre would fill several very large books. I know nothing at all about the history, the traditions, or the various schools of technique of the theatre. The "dynamics of construction," a familiar term to trained theatre people, might, for all I know, be something that pulls the curtain up. You could throw an Elizabethan buskin at me, and my only reaction would be to dodge it, that's all. And I wouldn't know the Ibsen technique from a load of hay. To repeat, all I know about the theatre is what I see from the front row in the balcony.

But don't get the idea that I've got an inferiority complex. The average playgoer is one of the most critical animals in the world. And, I feel that in spite of my cultural shortcomings, and lack of knowledge and training concerning the theatre, I'm still on a par with a lot of critics.

I've seen seven Broadway productions and the current Theatre Union play—*Bitter Stream*. With the exception of one uptown production, *Case of Clyde Griffiths*, I found Broadway doing an amazing thing—presenting in the most expert, smooth-flowing and beautifully acted manner the damndest froth and dribble anybody ever took time off from sanity to think about. On the other hand, I found the Theatre Union and the Group Theatre struggling valiantly to present plays of things that are of the utmost concern to everybody, but doing it under terrific handicaps and sometimes rather badly. The now deceased Group Theatre play, *Case of Clyde Griffiths*, is an illustration of what I mean.

In my opinion there is no finer acting group in the city than the Group Theatre. And I think *Case of Clyde Griffiths* would still be running to a full house if the mistake hadn't been made of trying to portray a good story in a bad way. The error was made in implying that the average audience doesn't know what the score is—and had to be told every five minutes by a chap who stopped the show to wave a finger under everybody's nose and tell them about the simple facts of life. (About the third time the Speaker in the cast took the floor to lecture the audience, a little girl next to me turned to her dad and said: "There's that man again, papa.")

The technique, as employed here, of alternating between acted episodes and comments from the Speaker, may be all right to enlighten and impress an audience of backward peasants or a group of slow-thinking mountaineers, but it certainly doesn't go over in New York City. The workers who saw the show left at the final curtain a little resentful at being lectured. The high-hat crowd didn't believe a word the "Speaker" said, anyway. The only thing that saved the production from being completely bad was the beautiful acting on the stage and the extraordinary skill of the "Speaker" (Morris Carnovsky) in handling his difficult part.

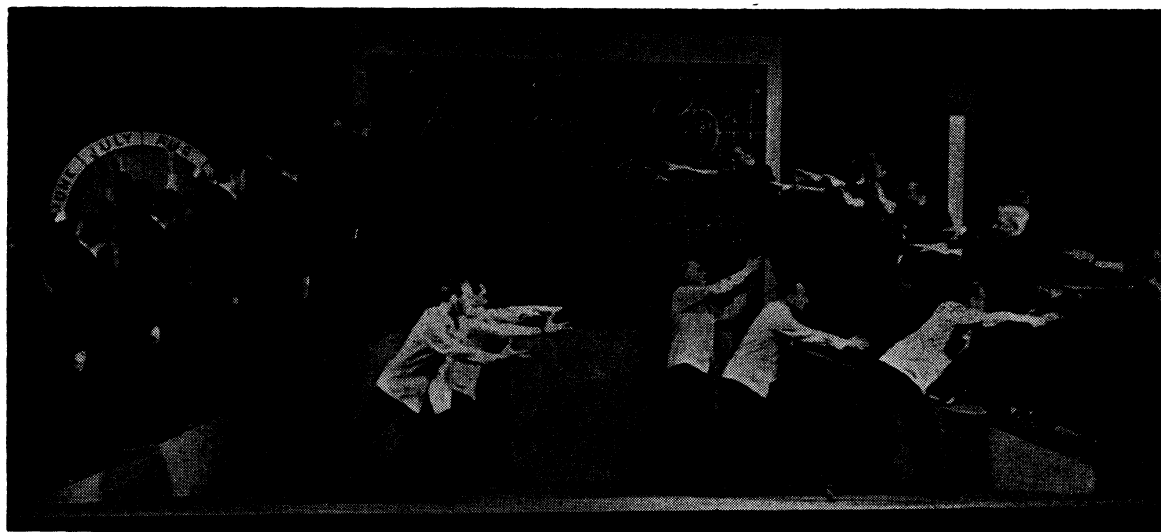
Speaking for myself (and I think my opinions represent the average audience reactions) the less "Piscator" and other attempts on the part of the Group Theatre and Theatre Union to employ ultra-arty forms—the better. One of the reasons that thousands flocked to see *Stevedore* was because it told a simple straightfor-

ward story that rolled along as smooth and clear as a glass ball on ice.

The first hit show I saw on Broadway was *Pride and Prejudice*. What makes it a hit is beyond my understanding. It's the gosh darndest piece of nonsense. Anyone gullible enough to buy a ticket will learn that it's a play that reveals the startling fact that about a hundred years or so ago there were proud young middle-class gals in England whose pride vanquished certain upper-class male snobs in the final scene of the last act. The cast was good, and the actress who took the part of the heroine's mother, did a swell job of portraying a female with a brain that rattled around like a peanut in a washtub. Maybe it's good entertainment for the bluebloods, but the thing that roused my ire about the play was—who gives a hoot whether there were snobs in Old England or whether they reside on Park Avenue today? What does it matter? To hell with them.

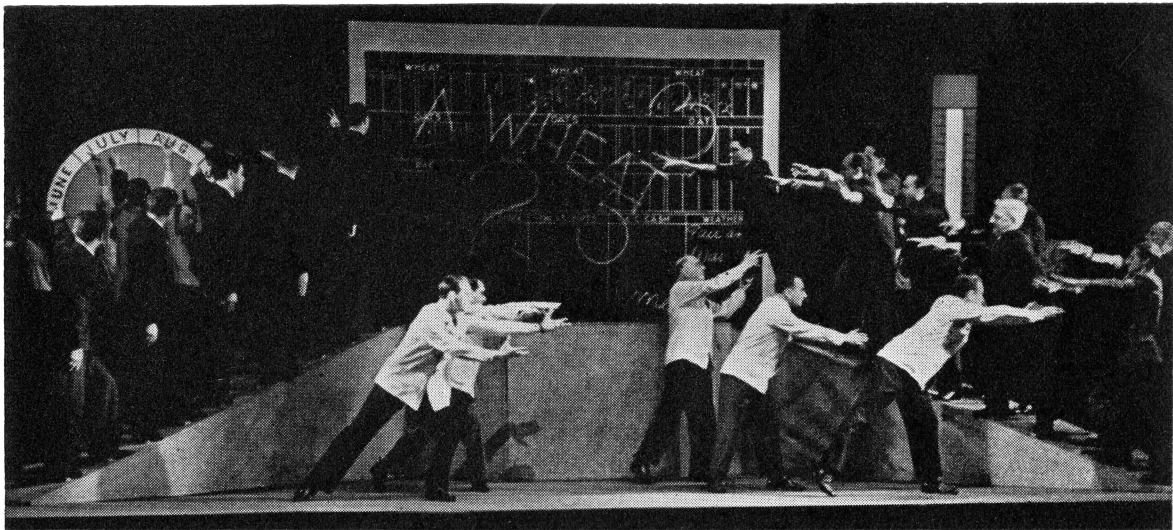
In contrast to *Pride and Prejudice*, the Broadway success, *The Children's Hour*, is something to write home about. One fact is simply undeniable—the play is powerful in every aspect of good theatre. The characters live, the drama is gripping and believable, and the cast does a splendid job, particularly Florence McGee, who plays the pathologic-kid, and the two school teachers, played by Ann Revere and Katherine Emery.

I might say, though, that I can find plenty to quarrel about in the contents of the play. At the risk of being considered a wee bit intolerant, and an advocate of singing the International during all intermissions, I suggest that there are



FROM THE LIVING NEWSPAPER'S "TRIPLE-A PLOWED UNDER"

Valente



FROM THE LIVING NEWSPAPER'S "TRIPLE-A PLOWED UNDER"

*Valente*

other themes far more important than that contained in this play. *The Children's Hour* tells the story of how a mentally lop-sided little squirt of a school girl ruins the happiness and lives of two teachers by spreading lying rumors that the two ladies in question have been playing house together in a slightly fairyish fashion. Perhaps a lot of folks think such things are more important than the fact that machine guns are beating a tattoo against strikers in steel towns, or that the anguish of millions of unemployed is not quite comparable to the grief of a school teacher accused of Lesbianism, but I can't agree with them.

Perhaps such things really *are* more important in certain circles of society. And, leaning over backward to be fair about the matter, maybe this writer has seen very little of Lesbianism, and too many police clubs. Thus it is possible that I am prejudiced from mere ignorance of the fact that sexual problems and resulting scandal are a major social problem. But *Children's Hour*, as I say, is swell, worth while paying to see, and something to write home about.

Of all the plays I saw, the performance of James Barton in the part of Jeeter Lester in *Tobacco Road* was a job of outright genius. You can protest to the editor of this magazine if you think I'm careless with my adjectives—but in my mind, genius it was. I sat in the third row when I saw the play and I actually ached with mingled emotions of laughter and tears when the show ended. I was close enough to Barton to perceive every little futile gesture, to hear every muttered soil-grown obscenity, to observe each gleam of hope that died aborning in the eyes of that human wreckage that he characterized. He was superb! With the exception of the actor who played the part of Lester's half-wit vicious son, the rest of the cast were mere stooges to fill in the necessary parts of the play. The content of the play itself leaves the observer in a conflicting state of mind. He has witnessed a most damning indictment of the present social system, and at the same time no solution to the problem is presented other than stark defeat. Be that as it may, I'd walk ten miles backward any time to see Barton perform in a Theatre Union production.

Another Broadway show that I went to see was the current hit—*Boy Meets Girl*. It reminded me of a bunch of Mexican carnival people I saw some years ago, who were indulging in an uproarious marijuana jag. They screamed and belled with deep belly spasms of laughter. The audience at *Boy Meets Girl* (including myself) laughed the same way—and like the Mexican marijuana smokers, we

came to after it was all over, suddenly aware of the fact that we had been having a hell of a good time about nothing at all. The play is really funny, but it's the particular acting of one of the cast, Allyn Joslyn, that provides the loony atmosphere of the show with a portrayal of a scatter-brained orneriness that is hilarious. Everybody in the audience became infected with his satirical buffooning of the part of a Hollywood movie writer. But the sum total of the show still amounts to a whiff of marijuana, nothing else.

If you have seen *Jumbo*, that brain-storm of Billy Rose, alleged master mind of Broadway showmen (as the program "admits"), don't bother to go to the circus the next time it comes to town. *Jumbo* is a circus minus the indelicate odor of Mamie the Giraffe, hamburger stands and sawdust. The only discernible difference between the circus and Rose's show is that *Jumbo* is played in an air-conditioned house. And, yes, I almost forgot—*Jumbo* has Jimmy "Mutiny" Durante and a clown who seems to be infested with bananas (he pulls three hundred out of one pocket). *Jumbo* is a lot of tinsel, tight-rope walkers, and girls who hang upside-down from the roof. It's just another case of Broadway making a lot of noise about nothing and being very entertaining while doing it.

I have reserved comment on the Theatre Union production, *Bitter Stream*, to the last because I think there is something special that has to be said about that group, its work, and its current play. About the play itself—aside from a few minor flaws in the first act, it does more in a few hours to bring home with smashing force the almost unbelievable brutality of Italian fascism (and it CAN happen here), in a colorful, living, convincing manner, than a packed mass meeting knee deep in leaflets in Madison Square Garden.

A criterion of a good play and good acting, to my mind, is that phenomenon of the imagination when, after the first act begins, the observer starts to lose the sense of viewing artificial scenery and mimicking puppets, and both the scenery and characters begin to blend into real people surrounded by real walls. That's the moment when the footlight barrier between the audience and the stage gradually fades away and you spend the rest of the play among the characters themselves. That's the feeling I got when I saw *Bitter Stream*. The plot is simple—the story of Italian peasants, cynically hounded off their farms, and their leaders ruthlessly murdered—but the curtain rings down with the peasants still fighting. It's a good show and everybody with enough sense to keep out of the rain

ought to go and see it. And that appeal brings me to a point which I want to raise.

I remember a few years ago often hearing class-conscious workers and intellectuals bemoaning the fact that only the wealthy were privileged to enjoy the theatre. Why? The answer was, first, who wants to see the decadent stuff that Broadway produces?—and—we haven't (they would say) a theatre of our own, where we can see what we want to see. Well, it seems to me that when a little band of pioneers finally came along and were willing to break their necks building that sort of a theatre and producing those sort of plays, these same folks rushed like a mob of dilettantes to see the first few productions and then proceeded to let those pioneers down as thoughtlessly as Park Avenue knifes its own heroes of the moment in the back. I'm addressing myself directly to those people on whom our own theatre must depend for an audience if the theatres that we want are to survive.

One cannot expect that every production of left-wing theatres will turn out to be a perfectly polished, beautifully acted, inspiring play. Even Broadway, with its tremendous financial resources, its support of the press, its high-powered press agents and what not, has a big percentage of outright flops. I think that there should be loyalty enough from our side of the fence for a show of tolerance, understanding and willingness to give support to our own theatres.

But unfortunately too many people who demanded a theatre of our own are willing to spend money for innumerable Hearst-produced movies and even "decadent" Broadway plays. The performance of *Bitter Stream* that I attended had far from a full house. It should have been packed to the rafters. The play deserves attention, but unless those people who can make it a success snap out of it soon, *Bitter Stream* may be the last show we will see for a long time below Forty-second Street.

After I had this article all finished and had given it to the editor of this magazine they sent me uptown to see the *Triple A Plowed Under*. I am sorry I didn't see that show before I had written this piece. Until I saw the WPA show, I had the idea, as I said in the beginning of this article, that the only groups attempting to grapple with serious problems were the New Theatre groups and the Group Theatre. I take it back.

What's got me stumped about the play in question, is this: there's a "speaker" in the *Triple A Plowed Under* and the acting is also episodic, as in *The Case of Clyde Griffiths*. But there the similarity

stops. The WPA show is so good that it makes your hair tingle and sits you on the edge of your seat.

The play, as short as it is, moves swiftly, and is so convincing that some of the scenes might just as well be a television projection of an incident occurring somewhere in America the very moment you are sitting in the theatre. The opening scene in particular, depicting the war years with a mob of citizens in the foreground under the grip of war hysteria, and an endless line of troops marching in the background, is the best bit of staging I have ever seen. The lighting at times, throughout the play, is so perfect that the observer gets the illusion that he is viewing an animated Rembrandt painting.

There is no "acting" on the part of the individuals on the stage. Everything moves collectively, and instead of "acting" you witness a vivid accounting of historical facts by groups of performers. So real are these facts presented, in breath-taking scenes, that you don't have time to pick out any individual characters or examples of particular acting on the part of anyone in the cast. Yet each character is an individual with problems and needs, representing not only himself but a large group of people. What the secret of the success of this method is, I don't know. But I do know that it is one of the most effective things I have witnessed in an uptown show.

I think this WPA "Living Newspaper" group has unwittingly accomplished something here that will have lasting reverberations in the theatrical world. *Triple A Plowed Under* was produced under the direction of Joe Losey, completely independent of a whole host of parasites who have thrown a strangling web around the commercial theatre. The staff was able to choose with the greatest amount of freedom as big a cast as they wanted (without an eye to the budget). They had all the time they needed for rehearsals, and the best of material to choose from. All these facts led to several things: first, a new and startling technique, with a fresh pulsating beat of rhythm, and finally, without need to resort to the "unusual" to attract an audience—they have presented something so American about America for a change, that *Triple A Plowed Under* is a show I'll come back to again even if I have to pay my own way.

In spite of the howl set up by a bunch of Tories about the *Triple A Plowed Under* being a "Communist" plot, and as swell as the play is, I don't think anyone should get the idea that this show, or a hundred like it spread throughout the country, will be a short-cut to the revolution. But it might cause a revolution in

the theatre itself—and it will certainly strengthen the foundations already laid by the new theatre movement. I think the whole idea of a government subsidized theatre, with low admission prices

and with the staff and acting groups allowed complete freedom to choose their plays, and to select their own methods of presenting them, will pump rivers of fresh blood into the anemic theatre structure.

## The Theatre Collective

### — A Review

Pondering upon the Theatre Collective's two-week program at the Provincetown Playhouse, one concludes that if that organization doesn't watch itself it will become one of the most finished producing units of the new theatre circuit. The plays were astutely chosen to represent three radically divergent styles of treatment. *Private Hicks*, one expects, will long remain a staple of one-act production due to the immediacy of its subject. One could wish for it greater momentum and a more telling climax. I have long felt that the play should come to rest upon something more stirring than the promised distribution of a few leaflets and the conversion of a rather simple-minded soldier boy. The present ending undoubtedly approximates reality, since opposition to the use of the militia for strike-breaking purposes would not normally reach a more definite climax than that attained in the play. But the lifeblood of the theatre is excitement, and in this piece the excitement runs largely down-hill. If, despite this flaw in the workmanship, *Private Hicks* leaves a strong impression it is because the situation is vital and the lads who comprise the militia are treated with sympathy and understanding. While the Collective did not notably help the tempo, it did succeed in infusing the drama with seriousness and living characterization. Except for a little overacting in the treatment of Private Lee, the performances had force and precision; the work of Joseph Pevney as Private Hicks, Philip Wells as Corporal Cavanaugh and Robert Harper as Major Eccles is especially commendable. Hiam Shapiro's set caught the industrial background convincingly, though a more imaginative scenic design—perhaps a more sinister conception of the factory—could have added to the intensity of the production. Maurice McConnell's direction was best when it stressed the interplay between Hicks and other soldiers. It would have been more effective, however, if the conflict between the strikers and the militia in front of the factory could have been audible not merely at the beginning but also toward the end.

M. Jagendorf's adaptation of Lope de Vega's *The Pastrybaker* cannot pretend

to great contemporary significance, but as a study in style it is more or less enlivening to audiences and helpful to the actors. The stylization was, in the main, successful; and in the tragi-comedy of the apprentices' hunger even affecting. The set could have indulged in warmer tones and more sunlight in keeping with the mood, the place and the time of the comedy. Philip Stevenson's *You Can't Change Human Nature*, which completed the program, gave greater scope for the Collective's virtuosity. The play comes, in fact, as a welcome novelty in the new theatre movement which is so often and so inevitably sicklied o'er by the pale cast of tragedy. It is a comedy devoted to the dual duty of ridiculing fence-straddling liberalism and of pointing to the often ignored fact that the fathers of this country were revolutionists. The satirization of liberalism in the person of a clergyman who tries to stand between the "Rebs" and the Tories in the opening round of the Revolutionary War addresses itself to the funnybone as well as the mind. One could only wish that the farce were not so fast and furious. Though its strategy of reducing an attitude to an absurdity is a well tried device in American humor, a little more subtlety in a satire of this kind would be gratifying. However, the parallel between the situation in 1776 and 1936 is drawn suggestively. At a time when the slightest modification of economic policy is howled down as something counter to the spirit of Americanism, it is reassuring to be reminded that this nation was conceived in revolt against political and economic injustice, as well as that its cause was maligned and its leaders reviled with a venom worthy of our yellow press. We could mention some people who will not appreciate the reminder, but it is certain that the playwright did not strive too hard to win their approbation. . . . Under the direction of Lasar Galpern, the production was completely expert, except perhaps for a little crowding of the actors. Especially notable was the neat performance of Lillian Barrison as Susan Breed, the wife of the clergyman, played to the hilt by Maurice McConnell.

JOHN W. GASSNER.

# Film Forms: New Problems-II

BY SERGEI EISENSTEIN

The quality of the intellectual cinema was proclaimed to be the content of the film. The trend of thoughts and the movement of thoughts were represented as the exhaustive basis of everything that transpired in the film, *i. e.*, a substitute for the story. Along this line—exhaustive replacement of content—it does not justify itself. And in sequel perhaps to the realization of this, the intellectual cinema has speedily grown a new conception of a theoretical kind: the intellectual cinema has acquired a little successor in the “theory of the inner monologue.”

The theory of the inner monologue warmed to some extent the aesthetic abstraction of the flow of concepts, by transposing the problem into the more story-like line of the portrayal of the hero's emotions. During the discussions on the subject of the inner monologue, there was made none the less a tiny reservation, to the effect that this inner monologue could be used to construct things and not only for picturing the inner monologue.\* Just a tiny little catch admitted in parentheses, but it contains the crux of the whole affair. These parentheses must be opened immediately. And herein lies the principal matter with which I wish to deal.

Which is—the syntax of inner speech as opposed to that of uttered. Inner speech, the flow and sequence of thinking unformulated into the logical constructions in which uttered, formulated thought are expressed, has a special structure of its own. This structure is based on a quite distinct series of laws. What is remarkable therein, and why I am discussing it, is that the laws of construction of inner speech turn out to be precisely those laws which lie at the foundation of the whole variety of laws governing the construction of the form and composition of art-works. And there is not one formal method that does not prove the spit and image of one or another law governing the construction of inner speech, as distinct from the logic of uttered speech. Otherwise it would be without effect and void.

We know that at the basis of form creation lie sensual and image thought processes. Inner speech is precisely at the stage of image-sensual structure, not yet having attained that logical formulation with which speech clothes itself be-

fore stepping out into the open. It is noteworthy that, just as logic obeys a whole series of laws in its constructions, so, equally, this inner speech, this sensual thinking, is subject to no less clear-cut laws and structural peculiarities. These are known and, in the light of the considerations here set out, represent an inexhaustible storehouse, as it were, of laws for the construction of form, the study and analysis of which have immense importance in the task of mastering the “mysteries” of the technique of form.

For the first time we are placed in possession of a firm storehouse of postulates, bearing on what happens to the initial thesis of the theme when it is translated into a chain of sensory images. The field for study in this direction is colossal. The point is that the forms of sensual, pre-logical thinking, which are preserved in the shape of inner speech among the peoples who have reached an adequate level of social and cultural development, at the same time also represent in mankind at the dawn of cultural development norms of conduct in general, *i. e.*, the laws according to which flow the processes of sensual thought are equivalent for them to a “habit logic” of the future. In accordance with these laws they construct norms of behavior, ceremonials, customs, speech, expressions, etc., and, if we turn to the immeasurable treasury of folklore, of out-lived and still living norms and forms of behavior preserved by communities still at the dawn of their development, we find that, what for them has been or still is a norm of behavior and custom-wisdom, turns out to be at the same time precisely what we employ as “artistic methods” and “technique of formalization” in our art-works. I have no space to discuss in detail the question of the early forms of thought process. I have no opportunity here to picture for you its basic specific characteristics, which are a reflection of the exact form of the early social organization of the communal structures. I have no time to pursue the manner in which, from these general postulates, are worked out the separate characteristic marks and forms of the construction of representations. I will limit myself to quoting two or three instances exemplifying this principle, that one or other given element in the practice of form-creation is at the same time an element of custom-practice from the stage of development at which representations are still constructed in accord-

ance with the laws of sensual thinking. I emphasize here, however, that such construction is not of course in any sense exclusive. On the contrary, from the very earliest period there obtains simultaneously a flow of practical and logical experiences, deriving from the practical labor processes; a flow that gradually increases on the basis of them, discarding these earlier forms of thinking and embracing gradually all the spheres not only of labor, but also of other intellectual activities, abandoning the earlier forms to the sphere of sensual manifestations.

Consider, for example that most popular of artistic methods, the so-called *pars pro toto*. The power of its effectiveness is known to everyone. The pince-nez of the surgeon in *The Battleship Potemkin* are firmly embedded in the memory of anyone who saw the film. The method consisted in substituting the whole (the surgeon) by a part (the pince-nez), which played his role, and, it so happened, played it much more sensual-intensively than it could have been played even by a repeated portrayal of the surgeon. It so happens that this method is the most typical example of a thinking form from the treasury of early thought processes. At that stage we were still without the unity of the whole and the part as we now understand it. At that stage of non-differentiated thinking the part is at one and the same time also the whole. There is no unity of part and whole, but instead obtains an objective identity in representation of whole and part. It is immaterial whether it be part or whole—it plays invariably the role of aggregate and whole. This takes place not only in the simplest practical fields and actions, but immediately appears as soon as you emerge from the limits of the simplest “objective” practice. Thus, for example, if you receive an ornament containing a bear's tooth, it signifies that the whole bear has been given to you, or, what in these conditions signifies the same thing,\* the strength of the bear as a whole. In the conditions of actual practice such a proceeding would be absurd. No-one, having received a button off a suit, would imagine himself to be dressed in the complete suit. But as soon even as we move over into the sphere in which sensual and image constructions

\*See my article *Cinema with Tears* in the Magazine Close-up.—S.M.E.

\*A differentiated concept of “strength” outside the concrete specific bearer of that strength equally does not exist at this stage.—S.M.E.

play the decisive role, into the sphere of artistic constructions, the same *pars pro toto* begins immediately to play a tremendous part for us as well. The pince-nez, taking the place of a whole surgeon, not only completely fill his role and place, but do so with a huge sensual-emotional increase in the intensity of the impression, to an extent considerably greater than could have been obtained by another portrayal of the surgeon as a whole!

As you perceive, for the purposes of a sensual artistic impression, we have used, in capacity of a compositional method, one of those laws of early thinking which, at their appropriate stages, appear as the norms and practice of everyday behavior. We made use of a construction of a sensual thinking type, and as result, instead of a "logico-informative" effect, we receive from the construction actually an emotional sensual effect. We do not register the fact that the surgeon has drowned, we emotionally react to the fact through a definite compositional presentation of this fact.

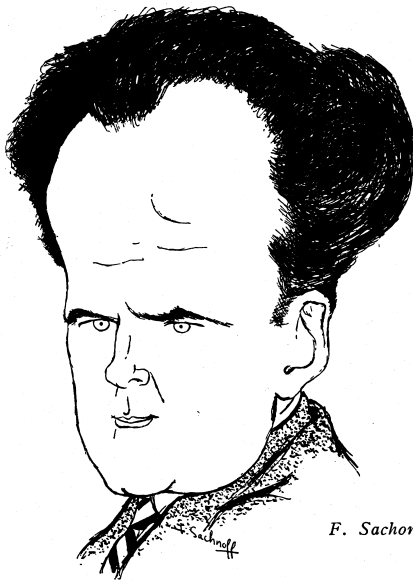
It is important to note here that what we have analyzed in respect to the use of the close-up, in our example of the surgeon's pince-nez, is not a method characteristic only of the cinema alone and specific to it. It equally has a methodological place and is employed in, for example, literature. "*Pars pro toto*" in the field of literary form is what is known to us under the term synecdoche.

Let us indeed recall the definition of the two kinds of synecdoche. The first kind: this kind consists in that one receives a *presentation of the part instead of the whole*. This in turn has a series of sorts:

- (1) Singular instead of plural.  
("The Son of Albion reaching for freedom" instead of "The sons of, etc.")
- (2) Collective instead of composition of the clan.  
("Mexico enslaved by Spain" instead of "the Mexicans enslaved.")
- (3) Part instead of whole.  
("The master's eye.")
- (4) Definite instead of indefinite.  
("A hundred times we say.")

The second series of synecdoches consists in *the whole instead of the part*. But, as you perceive, both kinds and all the sorts of subdivision are subject to one and the same basic condition. Which condition is—the identity of the part and the whole and hence the "equivalence," the equal significance in substitution of one by the other.

No less striking examples of the same occur in paintings and drawings, where



SERGEI EISENSTEIN

two color spots and a flowing curve give a complete sensual replacement of a whole object.

What is of interest here is not this list itself, but the fact that is confirmed by the list. Namely, that we are dealing here not with specific methods, particular to this or that art-form, but first and foremost with a specific course and condition of embodied thinking—sensual thinking, for which the given structure is a law. In this special, synecdoche, use of the "close-up," in the color-spot and curve, we have but particular instances of the operation of this law of *pars pro toto*, characteristic of sensual thinking, dependent upon whatever art-form in which it happens to be functioning for its purpose of embodiment of the basic ideological scheme.

Let us now turn to another field. Let us take the occasion when the material of the form-creation turns out to be the artist himself. Also this confirms the truth of our postulates. Even more: in this instance the structure of the finished composition not only reproduces, as it were, a reprint of the structure of the laws along which flow sensual thought-processes. In this instance the circumstance itself, here united, of the object-subject of creation, as a whole underlies the picture of psychic state and representation corresponding to the early forms of thought. Let us look once more at two examples. All explorers and travellers are invariably peculiarly astonished at one characteristic of early forms of thought quite incomprehensible to a human being accustomed to think in the categories of current logic. It is the characteristic involving the conception that a human being, while being himself

and conscious of himself as such, yet simultaneously considers himself to be also some other person or thing, and, further, to be so, just as definitely and just as concretely, materially. In the specialized literature on this subject there is the particularly popular example of one of the Indian tribes of Northern Brazil.

The Indians of this tribe—the Bororo, for example—maintain that, while human beings, they are none the less at the same time also a special kind of red parrot very common in Brazil. Note that by this they do not in any way mean that they will become these birds after death, or that their ancestors were such in the remote past. Not at all. They directly maintain that they are in reality these actual birds. It is not here a matter of identity of names or relationship, they mean a complete simultaneous identity of both.

However strange and unusual this may sound to us, it is nevertheless possible to quote from artistic practice, heaps and heaps of material which would sound almost word for word like the Bororo idea concerning simultaneous double existence of two completely different and separate and, none the less, real images. It is enough only to touch on the question of the self-feeling of the actor during his creation or performance of a rôle. Here, immediately, arises the problem of "I" and "him." Where "I" is the individuality of the performer, and "he" the individuality of the performed image of the rôle. This problem of the simultaneity of "I" and "not I" in the creation and performance of a rôle is one of the central "mysteries" of acting creation. The solution of it wavers between complete subordination of "him" to "I"—and "he" (complete transubstantiation). While the contemporary attitude to this problem in its formulation approaches the clear enough dialectic formula of the "unity of inter-penetrating opposites," the "I" of the actor and the "he" of the rôle, the leading opposite being the image, nevertheless in concrete self-feeling the matter is by a long way not always so clear and definite for the actor. In one way or another, "I" and "he," "their" inter-relationship, "their" connections, "their" interactions inevitably figure at every stage in the working out of the rôle.

(*Film Forms: New Problems*, translated by Ivor Montagu, is reprinted here through the courtesy of Life and Letters Today, an English quarterly edited by Robert Herring and Petrie Townshend. The article will be concluded in the June issue of NEW THEATRE.)



# Dance Reviews

BY NORMA ROLAND



Performance photo by Martin Harris  
ANNA SOKOLOW

Two young dancers of similar backgrounds and experience presented two diametrically opposed recitals this month. Lillian Shapero, supported by her dance group, performed at the Civic Repertory Theatre on Sunday evening, March 22nd; Anna Sokolow, assisted by her Dance Unit, presented her concert on the Y.M.H.A. series Sunday evening, April 5th.

Both Miss Shapero and Miss Sokolow acquired the major part of their dance experience as members of Martha Graham's Concert Group. Both young dancers are the possessors of excellent technical ability. But they differ greatly in their results. Miss Shapero's themes tend to the abstract and leave one unmoved, whereas Miss Sokolow is more concerned with the concrete use of dance symbols as a specific means of social comment. It is true that Miss Shapero achieves beauty of line and motion, that she pays strict attention to floor pattern, space design, and other important aspects of dance composition, but her *Two Dances of Unrest*, and *Decadence*, despite their concern with these basic elements, were not projected significantly enough to attain important dance comment. *Street Scenes* was more successful and carried over in a charming and original

manner some of the qualities of adolescence. *Holiday Suite*, *Tatterdemalions*, and *Dance of Resistance* were slight pieces, remaining in a purely abstract realm of expression.

By discovering what specific contributions she must bring to her themes to make them more dynamic and socially imaginative, by discovering what real conceptions she must vivify, Miss Shapero will increase her strength as an artist. Were she to ally herself more closely with the artists in her field, and thereby decrease her dance seclusion, she would insure herself broad and valuable contacts for her creative work.

Those who feel a lack of grace, charm, subtlety and refreshing metaphor in the dance of social comment, would be pleasantly surprised by Anna Sokolow's dance recital. But to assume that Miss Sokolow's contribution to the modern dance is solely in the realm of thin and superficial satire, is to do her injustice. In each of the dances on her varied program there was the integrating element of authoritative social statement. Miss Sokolow's desire to be a revolutionary commentator, a Hogarth in the dance, is unmistakable; it is apparent in every stance and movement.

The Dance Unit, assisting her on this program, reveals itself as a mature organization. There is a real and contagious spirit of cooperation and harmony in everything they do. Here nothing becomes ragged and diffuse. The problem of form which is inherent in any group dance has been solved by hard work and hard thought. *Suite of Soviet Songs*, a new composition, retains the simple form imposed by the accompanying choral music and possesses the fresh, vigorous quality characteristic of youth in a society that provides for it. *Inquisition 1936* is a powerful dance containing the vicious persecution of an individual by Fascist inquisitors. The portrayal in dramatic, ritual form exposes the brutality and barbarism of the modern Fascist. The symbolism of the Provocateur in the first section of the dance, however, was unclear to this reviewer; the episode needs more concrete allusion for actual audience communication.

*Speaker*, a solo number, has evidently been reworked and emerges as a mature and important dance. *Histrionics*, an ingenious satire, becomes firmer and more decisive each time it is repeated. *Four*

*Little Salon Pieces*, satirizing the debutante, reveals a concentration of all of Miss Sokolow's qualities; her distinctive, poker-face humor, her sophistication, and her professional economy of movement. She is a dancer who does not oversimplify to the point of naïveté; neither does she understate her motives. Her dances are never pale and anaemic. In emphasizing the elements of humor and satire, Miss Sokolow is developing a great American tradition. It is a surer way to the hearts and minds of people than many another.

## Men in the Dance

Two concerts this month have offered the work of men in the dance: the first, the New Dance League recital on March 15th at the Majestic Theatre, and the second, Benjamin Zemach on March 29th in the Y.M.H.A. series at the Theresa L. Kaufmann theatre. Men in the Dance showed the various approaches to the dance existing today: from the folk expression and exciting ritualistic presentations of the African Dancers to the more modern contributions of Charles Weidman, José Limon and William Matons. Between these two extremes were the Japanese dances by Saki, two Jazz dances by Roger Dodge, too extended for effectiveness, and the work of John Bovingdon. His *Two Portraits*, with documentary prologues, proved to be interesting integrations of the dance and spoken word. Valentinoff, a young newcomer, offered two ballet dances in a peculiar, loose manner which manages to achieve momentarily notable technical feats. His excerpts from *Prince Igor* was more to our liking than the tasteless and snobbish aspects of *Hobo*, which had no place on a New Dance League program. We doubt if it should be on any program at all.

Benjamin Zemach, recently returned from Hollywood for a New York visit, draws upon Yiddish national, religious, and folk culture for his dance material. In *Palestinian Folk Songs*, Zemach shows great wit in his use of movement. *The Little Man and His Dreams* and the *Beggar* are cleverly conceived and artful portraits. *The Worker's Dance on the Soil* is less successful since Zemach approaches the theme in an emotional manner and depends upon this alone to project the dance rather than significant movement. Mr. Zemach is an artist who possesses control over his instrument as well as an originality of approach. If he took the robust, dynamic and explosive quality he achieves in *Joyous*, a recitation in Hebrew, and transferred it into dance, he could easily make better use of his creative ability and become a dancer of deeper social insight and intention.



*Performance photo by Martin Harris*

ANNA SOKOLOW

## The Dance Guild Recital

The Dance Guild, affiliated with the New Dance League, gave its first recital on March 22nd, presenting Mary Radin, Miriam Blecher, Jane Dudley, Blanche Evan, and Eleanor King. Blanche Evan appeared on the program in a strong and challenging light. Her suite: *Resentment, Awareness, Into Action*, because of its clear conception and its directness overcame the banality of a familiar—and favorite—theme. Miss Evan revealed an objectivity of approach which, for the young dancers, has always been one of the most difficult things to maintain.

Mary Radin displayed considerable invention in her compositions, but a decided inability to concentrate it within the limits of the given material. Her dances cover a broad canvas of impressions not very well comprehended. The result was vagueness and lack of continuity. Miriam Blecher employed her distinctive qualities of lyric loveliness and dramatic intensity to a movement interpretation of the Moross song, *Letter to the President*. The stirring pathos of the song, sung exceedingly well by Sylvia Garner, were impressively caught by the dancer. The only other new number on the program was *Peace—an Allegory*, by Eleanor King, a slight but amusing burlesque on the lady with the dove.

E. R.

## Open Letter

As a former professional student of the New York Wigman School, I wish to bring to the readers of *NEW THEATRE* the realization that the article *From A Dancer's Notebook* by Blanche Evan is a reaction to a glimpse of the elementary work of the method of teaching employed by Hanya Holm. If Miss Evan had taken the required three year course her questions and doubts would have been answered. The best way to make this clear is to give a general outline of the stages of development through which a student is directed during this three years course.

The first year is occupied in preparing the ground; that is, in relaxation of mind and body in order to allow a free path for the emotions. This is supplemented with rigorous technical training and a gradual development of confidence in following through impulses arising either from a technical or emotional stimulus: the experiencing of ecstasy both physically and emotionally. The positive result of a year's work is a decided gain from the viewpoint of emotional release of the student together with a detailed probing of kinetics and its outcome in dance movement. The one temporary negative result, however, is a transient state of chaos. "Where is the form? What am I doing? Why?"

The second year is the year of clarification, a gradual reeducation of the mind without hindering the inevitability of movement as directed by kinesthetic, dynamic and emotional content. The whole body becomes sensitive. An awareness of each part of the body while in movement, and the relation of each to the whole (both body and space) is developed. The student begins to respond to form without falling into set patterns. Each theme finds its own

movement, and one learns to discriminate between the organically essential and the purely arbitrary movement. Order is brought into the chaos. During all of this period the technical ability is being increased to meet the growing demands. Through discussion classes, clarity is brought into the theoretical background. A basis of solid knowledge of the physical and mechanical foundations of movement in body and space, and also of the emotional sources is being laid.

The third year is the year of organization, transformation and synthesis. There are even greater demands made on composition, on self-discipline, on technique. Character and style begin to develop. The body is now instrument. The problems of endurance, intensity and projection must be confronted and the student must learn to transform himself. He is no longer himself when he dances: he is now what he dances.

During the three years there has been a careful guidance toward independence and an encouragement of individual work. The relation of teacher and pupil becomes gradually that of two individuals working toward a common goal, the dance.

This is the foundation on which the school works. From the results, especially in the last New York demonstration given at the New School For Social Research last fall, it is obvious that we are watching a group of highly trained dancers who are capable of applying themselves to any problems either technical or emotional and, according to the talent of the individual, to fulfill the demand of the theme. We must not forget that the results of a creative method of teaching depend on the receptive as well as creative ability of the student. Technically we can all reach a high degree of proficiency if the necessary time and energy are applied, but creatively each one has his limits.

As I see the method of teaching in use by Hanya Holm, I can only say it is the broadest foundation a dancer can get. From that base it depends on the individual how much creative advancement can be achieved. Whether a dancer chooses abstract themes, emotional themes, social or political themes, he is equipped to evolve his own style. After three years of study we are dancers who have still to prove to ourselves and to the world our mission as productive artists. We have learned how to work and have been given the materials. We cannot expect any school to manufacture an artist.

In evaluating or expressing an opinion about a method of teaching it is essential that a full perspective be gained before publicly making any statements. Since Miss Evan worked only a very short time in the New York Wigman School, she must be considered incompetent to judge the value of the method she undertook to discuss.

FRANZISKA BOAS.

## Detroit Dance Festival

The difference between war and peace is greater than the difference between ballet and modern dancing. It was therefore not difficult, on the basis of maintaining peace and freedom of expression, to induce leading dance groups of Detroit to participate in a Dance Festival presented by the New Dance Group (New Dance League affiliate), and the Rebel Arts Group, on the anniversary of America's entry into the World War. Only a spirit of mutual interest could have made possible the presentation on one program of such diversified numbers as those presented by Theodore J. Smith, ballet master of the Detroit Civic Opera, and Tosia Mundstock, director of the Rebel Arts Group. Other participants were Ruth Murray and her Wayne University Group, Olga Fricker and her group, Edith Segal and the New Dance Group.

This Festival received the sponsorship of leading figures in the field of education, peace, religion, labor and civic work. Reverends, rab-

bis, YWCA executives, officials of the Federation of Labor, art patrons, administrators of the Board of Education, all endorsed the Festival. In Detroit, a leading industrial city, where even at this moment factories are manufacturing chemicals and war machines for the next conflict, this united front of all dancers for the preservation of peace is a significant achievement.

It is hoped that through continued collective effort, the prediction of one of Detroit's theatre critics, Ralph Holmes, will be realized: "It was an event so obviously of aesthetic value, that the Modern Dance Festival should certainly become an annual affair, preferably with the Detroit Symphony for its musical background and the larger Orchestra Hall for its increasingly wide appeal. As it was, it was most gratifying to find the Art Institute auditorium holding what any showman would call a capacity audience, and one that was keenly responsive to every number."

EDITH SEGAL.

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# The Trade Paper Racket

(Continued from page 16)

cistic method of allying itself, in the early or adherent-fishing period, with the underdog. It took up the cudgels for those dissatisfied writers, directors and actors who felt they had grievances. It wasted none of its ample supply of soft soap on the studios who naturally resented complaints from the boys and girls to whom they were paying all that money when they themselves were only mopping up income-tax fodder. The hell with the studios—said The Reporter. The hell with the producers—and the supervisors—and the whole nepotic, incompetent clan. Buck the lot of them.

Writers and directors and actors flocked to the support of their mouth-piece. They raved about The Reporter, which was slipped under their doors every morning without the preliminary of a subscription. It had snappy reviews of pictures. It gave credit where credit was due—to the “creative brains.” They enjoyed particularly that little Winchell-esque column of chatter. You could always get from somebody the dope behind the thinly-veiled names. The column was not exclusively confined to stuff the victims enjoyed, but what the hell—it makes amusing reading when it's about the other fellow. Daily Variety and the other trade papers were obviously corrupt. But here was a snappy, scrappy little paper that really gave you the low down.

There was no advertising to begin with. That would come later. There wasn't any subscription list. The hell with that chicken feed. Yet nobody paused to ask who put up the money to start the little paper.

Nowadays you hear whispers that if you open Louis B.'s pocket you will find The Reporter nestled there. Some will tell you that there are also bits of it in the pockets of Joe Schenck and Harry Cohen and Zanuck. You will hear stories about sums of money that Wilkerson has, in his day, borrowed from producers. The rumor that he ever paid them back has not yet leaked into circulation.

As a matter of record, Wilkerson started his paper with money advanced by a New York real estate brokerage house. The check was signed H. H. Sonn. Some say a female relative of Billy's got Sonn to lend him the money. Some insist the brokerage firm merely fronted for the real money. Some say—but writers should be above taking in rumors. Only wasn't it lucky for Myron Selznick, the fighting bantam of the ten percenters, that Billy took such a fancy for him? And said such nice things about Myron's clients?

But Billy, not satisfied with one iron in

the fire, opened a print shop in connection with his paper, where he did printing for the studios. It doesn't necessarily follow that he gave notices to the studios who gave him printing. But it wouldn't have been like the boy from Buffalo to overlook the possibilities of his shop.

Business was looking up for The Reporter. It does seem as though a Mayer would see uses for such a paper, in his feuds with other producers. Possibly The Reporter's consistent antagonism to Winnie Sheehan, and its bitter and continuous vendetta against the Warners, had nothing to do with the fact that Mayer and Sheehan had locked horns—and no connection with Louis' long feud with the six warring Warners.

It is said in some quarters that Billy's dislike of Sheehan sprang from the fact that Winnie would not see him. Maybe it was Winnie's fraternal loyalty to the Quigley group which would not let him dicker with any other gang. Or maybe it was his well-known honesty.

It is doubtless a coincidence that when Mannie Cohen of Paramount had talent sewed up that M. G. M. couldn't get, Mannie got a riding with stirrups from Wilkerson—who, by the way, was friendly enough to Hearst when he was releasing through M. G. M. But when he took himself over to Warner's, Billy and Willie weren't such pals any more.

Joe Schenck may also have noticed what a handy little gadget The Reporter was. After Darryl Zanuck split with Warners, Schenck and Zanuck got together and founded 20th Century. Later 20th Century, with seven million dollars of intangible assets, got a half interest in the Fox Company which in 1929 was valued at ninety million. Darryl Zanuck, Joe Schenck (brother of M. G. M.'s Nick Schenck) and Bill Goetz (son-in-law of Louis Mayer) together own 50% of the



Gus Peck

20th Century-Fox stock, which virtually gives the M. G. M. crowd a controlling interest and explains why white-haired boy Zanuck is able to borrow all the M. G. M. stars.

Billy Wilkerson ballyhooed all the preliminaries for the 20th Century-Fox deal. And it wouldn't be fair if the boys, particularly Darryl, entirely overlooked him.

Edith G. Wilkerson's Low Down column created talk and, naturally, circulation. It also created something else—a healthy desire to stay out of it. Although it has since been cleaned up, for a time it was a loaded gun, and what it was loaded with would not always have passed the Health Department nor the Bureau of Vital Statistics. But it wasn't Wilkerson's fault if a lot of scared little fish decided that the way to stay out of it was to be a pal of Billy's. Wilkerson, unlike Ungar, never utters a threatening word. Get a machine-gun mounted in the right spot and trained—and you don't have to talk. People just naturally throw up their hands.

With everything running nicely, the boy who took Horace Greeley's tip looked around for additional outlets for his talents. He opened the Vendome Restaurant. Hollywood yapped about the prices, but flocked there just the same. The Vendome had inducements. An appearance merited a little mention in the chatter column. Publicity like that is cheap at five bucks a throw, with lunch tossed in.

Looking around for other ways in which he might be useful, Billy thought of providing a refuge for the dough that went begging after nightfall. He opened the Trocadero. Billy boasted openly that he promoted The Troc with no money of his own. He built it and stocked it entirely on credit. On the opening night his friends gave him a send-off by staging parties at his new club. One of these gentlemen, on signing the check for his party, discovered that the tariff figured sixty dollars a head. “You know,” he said to Billy, “there's only one trouble with this place—you don't charge enough.” Wilkerson, in relating the episode, added (and the narrator insists it was seriously), “You know, I think that guy was right?”

But Billy didn't stop at four fingers in the jam pot. Taking advantage of that home building instinct inherent in every breast, he invested in a tidy little real estate concern, handling property in a suburban section.

In the office of The Reporter a list of the people who have yearly contracts is hung in a conspicuous place where the reviewers can easily see it and refrain from being influenced by it—if they care to. It is whispered that Helen Gwynn, Edith's sister, left the reviewing staff of

The Reporter either because some trouble with her eyesight prevented her from seeing the list—or because when instructions were murmured in her ear about “fixing” a review, she was stone-deaf. Many Hollywood lads prefer to pay their tribute to Wilkerson by taking out a term contract for advertising and then not using the space. For \$750 you used to get unlimited space. But a little while ago the rate was lowered to \$600—for which, however, you are entitled only to \$800 worth of space. It really doesn't make any difference. Everybody knows the ads never do you one bit of good. They never get you a job or a renewal of contract or anything but a visit from the other wolves.

Personally Billy is a lot more popular than any of his rivals. He is a natty little man with a trick moustache. To look at him you would never put him down as a menace. But the trade paper boys know they can count on their allies in the bellies of the talent boys. The mere thought of a bad notice makes the latter revert to childhood. What would happen if they merely got together and stopped paying tribute? Are they afraid that if they won't play ball with Billy, they won't get jobs at M. G. M.? Naturally if M. G. M. had no talent, that would put Louis B. in a bad spot. Probably that's what they're afraid of. Because what could Billy or Arthur or Martin actually do to them? Pan the whole lot? And thereby persuade all of their producer friends not to hire any of them—but to get their pictures written by some other kind of machine? And acted and directed by robots?

Suppose none of the boys and girls went into the Vendome or the Troc? Of course none of them would get any nice, free notices in Edith's column. But if they refused to read his paper, perhaps they could stand the pain of that. If they must have a trade paper, how about getting out one of their own—a real one? There are writers among them, aren't there?

The actors, writers and directors each have a Guild. All they would have to do is to take concerted action to ignore a boy like Billy. No news—no subscriptions—no advertising. That's all. And if no writers, directors or actors read it or advertised in it, or contributed a penny towards it, what could Billy Wilkerson do with his paper? Your guess is as good as mine. . . .

It would be so easy to stop supplying ammunition for those machine guns. If the boys and girls could trust each other—and themselves—they could blow a whistle and call it a day for Martin and Arthur and Billy. Will the creative and artistic genius of the industry continue to

pay tribute—and complain about it (in quiet spots, of course, where they're sure Billy or Edith won't overhear)? Will Billy Wilkerson go on promoting cemeteries for actors and writers and directors, or will they get together to dig him a nice grave?

I don't understand writers and directors and actors. They really are the creative brains of a great and important industry. And they really wish to make great pictures. But how do they think they're going to do it, so long as they have their wishbones where their backbones ought to be?

### “Moscow Rehearsals”

(Continued from page 20)

4. Chief points showing the social meaning. 5. Chief points of form” (p. 136, see also pp. 128-9 on Vakhtangov himself). Unfortunately the author has not followed out his clues and has not indicated the particular relationship that exists in each theatre between its content and its form. Such an analysis is indispensable.

The reader of this article will readily recognize that the reviewer is obviously in complete accord with Mr. Houghton's statement in his final chapter, “Whither America,” that the future of the theatre in America would best be served by the creation of “collective permanent theatres.” But here, too, his very enthusiasm seems to carry Mr. Houghton into a good deal of vagueness. He generalizes about the fact that “our country is not dramatically minded. . . . It does not hunger for spectacles to feed its soul, as Stanislavsky claims the Russian nation does” (p. 264). On the eve of the World War, theatre directors and producers in Russia were deploring the sad state of theatres, the lack of audiences, etc. At the present moment, with many more theatres in existence, no Soviet play is a failure, the demand for actors exceeds the supply. When a play runs for a year in New York it reaches an audience of say 370,000, which is about 5% of the population. If a theatre were organized for the unemployed in New York alone each play could run for a year—if they could afford the price of admission. There is a vast untouched audience in America which has seen neither theatre nor movies for whom the theatre possesses a glamour and reality undreamt of by sophisticated Broadway.

Let nothing I have said above in criticism or in emphasis deter one from reading this book. Each chapter deserves a full and separate discussion. *Moscow Rehearsals* is undoubtedly one of the most stimulating theatrical books in recent years.

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## NEW THEATRE LEAGUE

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# "Bury the Dead": A Hollywood Preview

(Continued from page 8)

vote? (Applause.) That is my answer to the question, What can we people do about future wars? You can do away with future wars if you have a voice on the issue of war, which you can demand from your government, and I am positive the government will not be able to refuse you such a voice if you go about it in a legal and constitutional way. Naturally, if such a vote should be taken in the United States alone, it wouldn't mean the end of war because it wouldn't be sufficient that the United States would have outlawed war. It is necessary that all the people throughout the world do the same. All the people throughout the world feel the same—there are no people who want to be killed in a war, no mothers who want to send their children to be sent out to be killed. We have governments to do what we, the people, want.

If you are stirred up by this play—that is the solution. If you get up and say to the government, "Let us vote on the war, let us say if we want it—give us the legal, constitutional right—the right of the citizen to vote on this point," the government will not be able to refuse that and you will be able to vote on war and what afterwards happens will be a much more difficult task for the governments to act because they cannot disregard the lawful opinion of the public on that point.

MR. STEWART: I disagree with Mr. Lederer only in this extent—that I was rather glad the play ended on that note of indecision because I was then going to tell you how you could do something about it by helping out Contemporary Theatre, because after all, this is a meeting primarily for the Contemporary Theatre, New Theatre League and NEW THEATRE magazine—it is not a discussion of war and peace. I don't think we ought to lose sight in this very interesting argument of the fact that Contemporary Theatre is going to put on other plays on different subjects than this and that primarily what we are discussing is putting this play on now as soon as we can and getting behind it as much as we can.

MR. LEDERER: I know that I am here in the theatre which has as its policy other intentions than to produce anti-war plays alone because there are other problems in this life just as important and urgent as war, so I was by no means the victim of a delusion about the subject of the theatre.

DUDLEY NICHOLS: I realize that Mr. Lederer is an apostle of peace and I am sure we are all grateful for his having in a very practical way disposed of all war.

(Laughter.) But I think he is suffering under a delusion about the purpose of Mr. Shaw's play. I recall that a rather great playwright, Ibsen, who dealt with injustices and social problems, said, "It is not my function to solve problems, only to state them to wake people up to them." You realize he was a great man, and yet he didn't venture to offer a solution—people found solutions when they were emotionally stirred. I think Mr. Lederer does not understand that Mr. Shaw is an artist in the manner of writing his play. He is addressing the living and saying, "Don't go into your graves." But Mr. Shaw is an artist and doesn't do it that way—he puts it into an art form and makes it much more impressive.

MR. LEDERER: What Ibsen said is one man's expression. I personally would not be satisfied with just describing artistically a problem which is vital. I personally would try to do more than just describe a certain thing and stir up emotions. . . .

MR. STEWART: It is my feeling that a great deal of very fine feeling and excitement and emotion which has been aroused tonight about this particular play is in danger of being dissipated by discussion about certain aspects of war and peace. (Applause.) It is my hope that you will go home tonight having heard a perfect rendition of a very great play (applause) and that, moved by that, you will support this theatre and its allied theatres in other places. If you still want to throw the meeting open to a war and peace discussion, we will speak only about the production of this play and leave other aspects to some other meeting and some other symposium.

CLIFFORD ODETS: I agree with a great deal that Mr. Lederer said personally, but I would give Lloyds three to one that this very mild play would be banned in at least ten to fifteen American cities within the next twelve months. There is a reason why this play would be banned. It is written for a certain reason—to stop war—it is anti-war. I am very interested in what Mr. Lederer said because I myself am a playwright and have great technical problems to overcome. How can you activate your audience, make them go out of the theatre and do something, and yet not step off the stage yourself as the playwright? That is a great technical problem. However, one point must be made: If this play is banned, and I give three to one that in this country, in our America, our rich, fertile America, there are people who do not want this

play to be seen, and if they don't want it to be seen—what does that mean?

VOICES FROM THE FLOOR: They're afraid . . . war . . .

MR. ODETS: They want war. We must remember that although we stand up as humane people—no one wants to see anyone killed or wounded or maimed—that is true—still, there are certain elements in modern civilization which make war a necessity. There are certain imperialist interests that must have war to survive, and we are adults and we know it. (Applause.)

Mr. Lederer very nicely brought up the issue of prohibition and repeal. Let me ask you—in our democracy, did the majority want prohibition? NO! So where is the power of the vote? That means there are people who wanted prohibition and they set in force a tremendous propaganda machine for their interests because they think it is right to have prohibition. There are similar people who have tremendous business interests who, when the time comes to decide whether to have war or not, will set up their tremendous machine, and, by God, you will know that the Germans and Japs are here at Long Beach, Atlantic City, and the Atlantic Coast.

MR. STEWART: Unless there is something very important, I would like, before anybody leaves, to remind you that you can do something for Contemporary Theatre. Only by filling out this card, by sending money—if you are professionals, by offering your services—anything you can do for Contemporary Theatre will be of help. Half the receipts this evening go to NEW THEATRE in New York. This play read tonight will be published in the next issue of NEW THEATRE magazine. You can subscribe tonight for \$1.00 for eight months.

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# Film Checklist

(Continued from page 18)

They proceed to lead him all over town in a dizzy search for new material. But at the end of quite the wittiest patter of recent memory Jolson stands triumphant over the recumbent bodies of his well-wishers and intones the inevitable "Go a million miles for one of your smiles." William Keighley's direction of this scene reaches a high-water mark in the medium.

**SUTTER'S GOLD:** Based on the well-known novel by Blaise Cendrars and directed by James Cruze, this film occasions little more than regrets. Most to blame in all probability is the dull and oblique scenario. Cruze's direction is rather wooden, a quality reflected in the cast's performances. Inconsistencies in plot development make it even more difficult to accept *Sutter's Gold* as a commendable movie. Perhaps it is not in the cards for the novel to get good cinemization. The first time it lost out was five years ago when the story was taken away from Sergei Eisenstein, expressly invited to America to direct it. The present version, by Universal, temporarily completes its misfortunes.

**GIVE US THIS NIGHT:** A sad undertaking from any consideration, utilizing the bellowing voice and home-fried histrionics of Jan Kiepura. Mr. Kiepura, whose guiding principle is to outshout the entire cast combined, assiduously disdains anything less than triple forte. It's all very painful. Condolences are due Gladys Swarthout for her unavailing struggle with an ungrateful role and a noisy partner. Eric Korngold, who should know better, is responsible for a routine score and Oscar Hammerstein's lyrics are both awkward and commonplace.

**LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY:** Even the critic of the Daily News, whose readers are not always distinguished for mental maturity, rated *Little Lord Fauntleroy* four stars for children, and three and a half for adults, indicating in her gentle way that infants would be the film's chief beneficiaries. Produced by the David O. Selznick who gave a helpless and apparently grateful world *Little Women*, *Fauntleroy* constitutes a pretty shameless parade of maudlinities. It is unfortunate that the talents of John Cromwell and a good cast had to be wasted on thrice-regurgitated stuff.

**HOUSE OF A THOUSAND CANDLES:** Spy-meller with Irving Pichel as the heavy, Philip Holmes (he saves the world for international peace) and Mae Clarke (she saves Holmes for masculinity via marriage). The film makes you realize how unique are Alfred Hitchcock's at-

tainments in this medium. The more of these absurd, implausible rigmaroles we see the more we regret the myopic condescension of our review of Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* in a previous issue of NEW THEATRE.

**A MESSAGE TO GARCIA** and **THE LEATHERNECKS HAVE LANDED:** The first two in a seemingly endless series of impending films on the military and the glories appertaining thereunto. If all are like the above, critics had better begin enlarging their cesspools.

**CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION** (Russian): We are at a loss to explain how so inept and unsuitable an export ever found its way to the screen. A silent, made in 1934, displaying the psychological nuances of a Frank Merriwell epic, *Children of the Revolution* works an absolute disservice to the cause of Soviet films in America. There ought to be a law.

**DUBROVSKY** (Russian): After the novel by Pushkin. Released by the Lenfilm Studios. It would be gratifying to be able to report that in this film we had another prize-winner to follow *Chapayev* and *The Youth of Maxim*. *Dubrovsky*, however, gives us no such opportunity. The novel is obviously the stuff that good films are made of but whatever merits it possesses are more than cancelled by a routine, unimaginative transcription and a variety of stagey histrionics that is fortunately rare in most Russian products.

**DESIRE:** In which Marlene Dietrich carries her perfervid coals to the sexual Newcastle without any apparent objections from the censors or the Hays office. As an enticing jewel thief, who has the good fortune to fall for Gary Cooper, an American automotive engineer visiting Spain of the beautiful moonlight nights, she all but shrieks her passion from the screen with the consequence that at times the proceedings grow more than a little annoying. Fortunately for all concerned, the Dietrich divagations from the straight and narrow ultimately receive the benediction of marriage and the world is preserved for the license bureaus. Frank Borzage has delivered himself of a smart directorial job. Akim Tamiroff in his all too brief appearance manages the most amusing performance of the film. Cooper's engineer is a good portrayal. The Lubitsch touches come off in many places. In fact, with some restraint *Desire* might have been a genuine addition to the movie roster. But it is so hell-bent on sophistication that it actually achieves adolescence.

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## Perspectives — Past and Present

(Continued from page 12)

eralizations. Only in a tangible organization of spirituality can there be fixity for a troubled spirit, namely in the Church, Catholic, militant and medieval. Eliot's play dramatizes the conflict between the lay world and the Church around a specific historical event, the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket, while martyred for his opposition to the kingly power, dies not for an individual faith but for an institution. Here, then, is a rarely dramatized perspective in our day; one that stands for the ultimate flight from the present world, which, pressing closer to the ivory tower, leaves only two choices for the poet—fight or flight. We may not agree with the play, but it is important to encounter it, and when it is invested with the genius of Eliot and the generally able work of the WPA actors under the direction of Halsted Welles we are grateful to the Federal Theatre, which is doing increasingly fine work.

The whole complicated subject of poetic drama resolves itself into three disconcertingly simple questions: Does the poetry harmonize with the mood and the

intent of the play? Does it glide along with the flow of the dramatic action? Is it comprehensible? The first question presents no difficulties to the playwright, and the producers of *Murder in the Cathedral*; here we are in the middle ages and there is no problem of modern gangster talking like a Sir Walter Raleigh as in *Winterset*. Besides, Eliot's verse is rarely pretentious. The second question is answered, in the main, affirmatively, by the Federal Theatre's ingenious production. By breaking up the choruses into individual lines, the direction overcomes the utterly static quality of several of the lamentations. Fluid movement on the part of the women of Canterbury enables them to become, to a degree, participants in the struggle between the Archbishop and the kingly power; almost, indeed, against the playwright's own, very revealing prescription that, "For us, the poor, there is no action." Distribution of the performance on several levels by the scenic designer, Tom Adrian Cracraft, gives an illusion of action even when there is no action. But the verse is often incomprehensible, the blame resting on the actors and the director. Eliot's lines, with barely an exception, are speakable. They simply require better timing and clearer enunciation than they received. Fortunately, the really dramatic portions of the play weather all such inclemencies of diction.

Nevertheless, considering the actual fruit of Mr. Eliot's point of view, we are led to question the validity of an anachronistic perspective that will always lead a modern man (especially one so modern as Mr. Eliot) into a bog of intrinsic contradictions. The net result of the poet's self-conscious medievalism is an unwieldy drama consisting of two contradictory elements: On the one hand, we find a stiff reiterative libretto, a liturgical piece that creaks in the joints, wobbles with sanctimoniousness and takes nose-dives into scholastic obfuscations. It culminates fittingly in a spurious and infinitely dull sermon. On the other hand, mainly in the second of the two acts, the play achieves enviable dramatic heights in a bitter picture of the world and a stingingly ironical exposure of its sophistries and murderousness. This mood prevails from the moment the knights intimidate Becket to the last line of their hypocritical defense of the murder. The latest bulletin from Berlin, or Mr. Wolfson's *Bitter Stream* could not be more self-indicting than their several apologies. Eliot, has then, actually written two plays: an undramatic formal confession of faith and a real, if fleeting, drama of pessimism and hatred of the world. The latter part of the play is vibrantly dra-

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matic because Eliot, the convert, is still at heart the poet of the waste land, a singer of disgust. His most dramatic touches consist of insight into the nature of doubt, in Becket's struggle with the Tempters, and into the heart of cynicism, in the apologia of the murderers. The Church and Becket's cause are never brought to life. His affirmations are either suspiciously formal and boring or unspecifically mystical. "Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief!", spoken centuries before Mr. Eliot turned to the Church of England, is the real meaning of *Murder in the Cathedral*. That such a poorly concealed disharmony may produce superb poetry but is not conducive to consistent drama is self-evident. The playwrights in Westminster Abbey will not hail Mr. Eliot as a fellow-craftsman. Neither is it likely that the saints will rise up to call him blessed.

### The Equity Elections

(Continued from page 5)

cil would not have allowed *Jumbo* to be accepted by Equity as "a circus," when the musicians and stagehands labeled it a show. Because the Equity officialdom agreed with the management that *Jumbo* was a "circus," the cast rehearsed many weeks without pay.

Fourteen independent candidates are running for election. They are: Allyn Joslyn, Ann Revere, John Littel, Paul McGrath, Edward McNamara, Burgess Meredith, John Brown, Mary Morris, Sheperd Strudwick, Edith Van Cleve, Edward Everett Hale, Alexander Kirkland, Richard Gordon, and Eric Dressler. These candidates are pledged to no particular program, but they have indicated their awareness of the responsibilities of Council membership. They intend to be responsive to the needs of the Equity membership; their election means a stronger and better Actors' Equity Association.

### Danse Macabre

(Continued from page 23)

Jewish girls and we would not consider subjecting them to any unpleasantness, nor would we care to identify ourselves with a political program such as the one that is now being pursued in Germany.

"In the second place, we will be at Bennington College this summer with our entire group of men and women, and we prefer to be identified with the freedom and liberalness of the educational program at Bennington."

A handful of the unsuspecting may still imagine that a purely cultural event is scheduled to take place in the dance during the latter half of July in Berlin, but there can be little remaining doubt that the whole project is a frantic, commercial travel-agency racket to restore tourism to despised Nazi Germany and to whitewash (at least for the golden period of summer) the terrible stories of cultural persecution that persist so plentifully in the *ausländer*. Mrs. Moll has voiced her distress at the apparently unanimous refusal of Germany's invitation by America's first-rate dance artists. What a shame, she feels, if the country must therefore be represented by its second-rate artists. Let there be no American artists whatever at the International Dance Festival in Berlin this summer.

Join Miriam Blecher, Sophia Delza, Elsa Findlay, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, S. Hurok, Esther Junger, Lincoln Kirstein, Polly Korchien, Paul Love, Ruth Page, Wallingford Riegger, Max Reinhardt, Blake Scott, Anna Sokolow, Gluck Sandor, Tamiris, Charles Weidman and Benjamin Zemach in the unremitting boycott they have initiated. Let the German Ministry of Culture and Propaganda perform its own danse macabre in utter solitude before the entire antagonized cultural world.

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## Backstage

John Mullen, who contributes "A Worker Looks At Broadway" to this issue, has been a union organizer in the coal and steel industries. At present he is writing a novel which will be brought out by Covic Friede.

Roi Ottley has a daily column, "Hectic Harlem," in the Amsterdam News.

The porcelain caricatures of Meyerhold and Stanislavsky which are used to illustrate Lee Strasberg's review of *Moscow Rehearsals* are the joint work of three Russian artists: M. Kuprianov, P. Krilov and N. Sokolov. The pseudonym Kukriniki which is applied to their collective work, is an anagram of their three names.

*Ten Million Others*, by David Danzig, second prize winner in the contest for plays on the relief situation recently held by the City Projects Council and the New Theatre League, will be performed on a "New Theatre Night" at the Civic Repertory Theatre, on Sunday evening, May 3rd. On the same bill will be a runner-up in the contest, *From Little Acorns*, by William Hauptmann and Joseph Samuelson.

Over fifty scripts were submitted in the contest which closed last month. Full details on the contest will be published in the next issue of NEW THEATRE.

*The Young Go First*, the CCC camp play which was first presented by the New York Theatre of Action last June, was performed in a condensed version by the Chicago Repertory Group April 4th to 12th. The Yonkers Art Group announces John Wexley's drama of the Scottsboro boys, *They Shall Not Die* for performance May 1st-3rd, at the Group's Studios, 23 North Broadway, Yonkers. . . . The New York Community Players will offer *The Drift*, by Claire and Paul Sifton, May 28th-30th. . . . The Minneapolis Theatre Union will present the Assembly Players in Valentine Katayev's *Squaring of the Circle*, May 9th to 11th. . . . United Theatre, a cooperative group sponsored by Rebel Arts, is casting for a three-act play by Ivan Sokoloff. Ben-Ari, formerly of the Habima, will direct. Interviews will be held Mondays and Fridays at 7.30 p.m., at 44 East 21 Street, New York City.

On April 27th the Group Theatre opened an extensive tour of Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing!* at Ford's Theatre in Baltimore. The following week will find them in Chicago, for an indefinite engagement. Further bookings are not yet definite, but it is expected that the Group will play additional Eastern and Middle Western cities until some time in June. Readers of NEW THEATRE are urged to watch for the arrival of *Awake and Sing!* in their cities.

Dr. John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church will review *Bury the Dead* on Wednesday evening, May 20th at 8.15, at the Church Center, 550 West 110 Street, New York. Dr. Holmes is the author of the anti-war play *If This Be Treason*, which the Theatre Guild presented last fall.

It is very encouraging to note the growing activity and influence of the New Film Alliance. Since last October they have been running film showings at regular intervals of three weeks. These showings have not been just ordinary revivals. Instead, the Alliance had prominent speakers to discuss the film and later participate in an open forum from the floor. The need for such discussion with its decided educational value, can scarcely be overestimated.

Early in the month a mass meeting to protest the banning of *It Can't Happen Here* will be held under the auspices of the Alliance. Dorothy Thompson, well-known newspaper correspondent and wife of Sinclair Lewis, will be one of the speakers at the meeting. Meantime, an organization called the Legion of Freedom of which Norman Burnstine is acting secretary, is conducting a nationwide consumers strike against M-G-M.

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Herbert Kline, editor of "New Theatre," will conduct a group of American theatre and film artists and enthusiasts to the festival. The ten days in Moscow and Leningrad devoted to theatre-going will be prefaced by a twelve-day tour of other cities in the U.S.S.R. to give background to the great productions staged in the two cities. (Write to "New Theatre" directly about the Herbert Kline group.)

A number of other groups have been arranged to go under the leadership of outstanding American authorities on the Soviet Theatre about which information will be given by Intourist.

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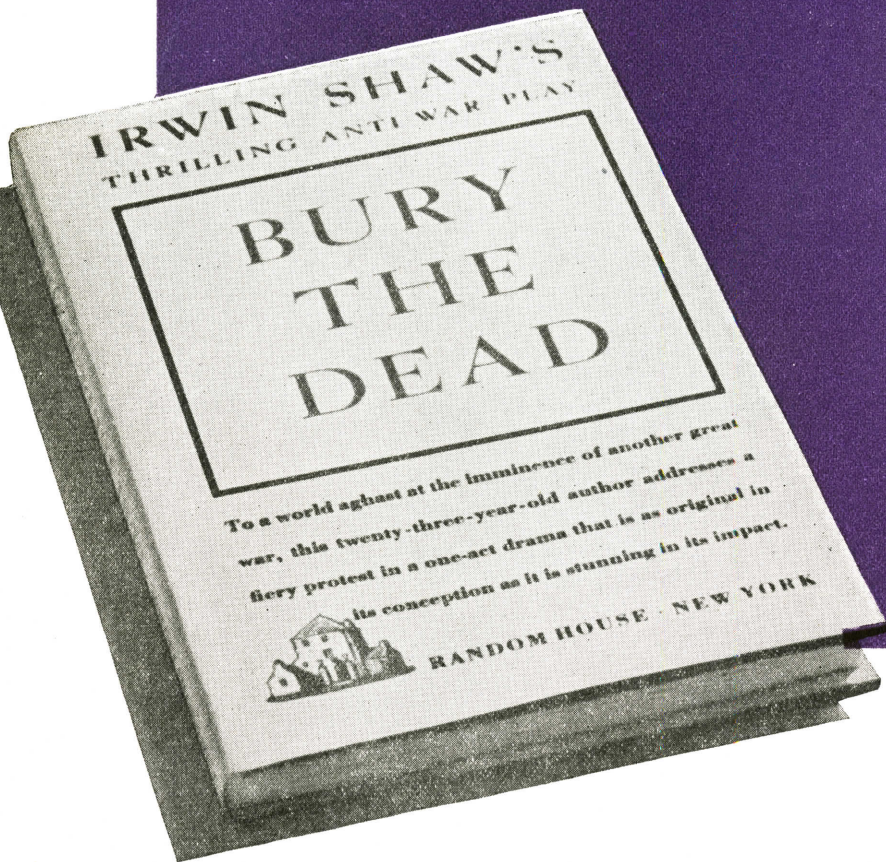
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